PIERCING POVERTY WITH LIGHT, AIR AND CONTROL 1887-1906: A CASE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF EIGHT NEW YORK CITY SMALL PARKS

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ABSTRACT

Piercing Poverty with Light, Air and Control 1887-1906:
A Case for the Preservation of Eight New York City Small Parks

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From 1887 to 1906, rising in the place of what were once blocks of squalor, poverty and slum tenements, eight small parks thrilled the children their respective New York City neighborhoods. Created under the Small Parks Act of 1887, these parks were intended to bring better health, light and air to neighborhoods where the city's poorest lived.

Four of the parks (Mulberry Bend, Hudson, Hamilton Fish and William H. Seward Parks), were clustered below 14th Street, where many of the city's newest and poorest immigrants settled in the mid to late 1800's, but the other four (East River, John Jay, DeWitt Clinton and St. Gabriel's Parks) were located next to the East and North (Hudson) Rivers, along Manhattan's perimeters, where the island's pollution was at its worst, rents were at their lowest, and the populations of the poor at their highest, after the area below 14th Street.

Each of these parks, and the neighborhoods surrounding them, has a unique origin and history. Well-known landscape architects, architects and engineers designed their landscapes, pavilions, bathhouses and gymnasiums plans. Designs of these parks fell into one of three landscape ideals: Picturesque, Beaux Arts or the emerging Playground-Recreational design.

As a group, they are an important representation of the national Small Parks Movement, as New York City was one of the first major cities to create small parks. They are especially important because of the notoriety of their designers. Eventually, all of these parks would become first, playground parks, and then, recreational parks, each retaining some element of their original design. All eight of these parks are still beloved and well used parks in Manhattan.

This thesis documents the histories and designs of these parks, as well as any significant subsequent changes to the parks; it documents elements in the parks worthy of preservation, including any extant structures, landscape plans or fencing, or foliage.

For information about this work, please contact Jennifer Frazer, jmfrazer@optonline.net.

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I am enormously grateful to you all.

For my mother, who taught me
if I worked hard enough,
I could overcome any obstacle;

For my husband, who showed me
if I worked hard enough for long enough,
I could shape my life into whatever I dreamed;

And, for my children,
for whom I wanted to finish all my hard work,
so that together, we could go outside and play.

~ jmf

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1.0 Introduction

On October 17, 1903, 20,000 children took matters into their own hands. Waiting impatiently in the rain, barricaded out of their new neighborhood park by the police, their parents lost somewhere behind them in the crowds, they filled East Broadway, Canal, Hester and Rutgers Streets for more than a block in each direction. The children craned their necks, and stood on top of anything nearby to catch a glimpse of Mayor Seth Low arriving; his car navigated slowly through the crowds as the children climbed up "on its sides and front," seemingly more curious about the car than its inhabitant. Soon Episcopal Bishop Henry C. Potter arrived, followed by Jacob Riis and Orthodox Rabbi Dr. Philip Klein. As the police finally opened the park gates, allowing some of the children in to sit in the unclaimed dignitaries' chairs in the park, the most eager ones, from ages one to sixteen, swarmed, pushed and knocked down policemen and photographers to get inside the park and in front of the Mayor's grandstand. With four times as many children as seats, they climbed onto gymnastics apparatus, nearby rooftops, fire escapes and trees in an effort to see and hear the celebration; for on that day, in the rain, the nation's first municipal playground, William H. Seward Park, opened in their own neighborhood![1]

New York City Mayor Abram Hewitt, with the assistance of sixteen municipal leaders, persuaded the 1887 New York State Legislature to pass an Act to help its largest city gain much needed "breathing spots" in the form of new small parks.[2] Referring to it as a measure of "imperative necessity for the health, comfort and decency of our people," Hewitt argued that the poorest tenement districts had become so overpopulated that their tenants were literally "gasping

[1] "Seward Park Is Opened; Mayor Low Speaks to Vast Crowd Gathered in the Rain. Thousands of Children Sweep Away Policemen and Establish Themselves According to Their Inclination," *New York Times*, October 18, 1903.

[2] "Hewitt's Appeal to the Assembly: A Petition to the State for Justice to the City-Small Parks," *New York Times*, April 21, 1887.

for air," particularly in hot weather. He added that because they lived so densely, any disease introduced in their tenements spread quickly within, leading to excessive death rates.[3] Frustrated by what he and other New York City progressives saw as lack of social responsibility by landlords, tenants and an ever-increasing immigrant population, they agitated government representatives for mandated change through state law.

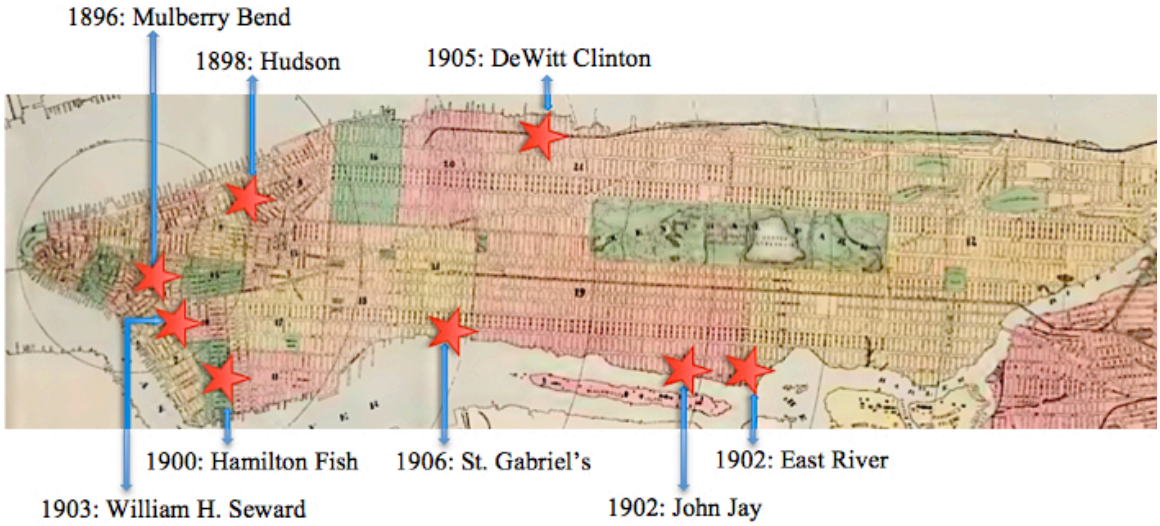
Hewitt declared that the creation of these new small parks in the city's most densely populated poor districts would serve not only as impetus to remove tenements from what were to become new park sites, but that their creation and implementation would help to improve the health of the poor while serving as a positive moral force among the poor neighborhoods. Hewitt had high hopes for the city's new parks; he argued that they would reduce disease, promote social change, help to eradicate slum housing, improve the landscape and maintain or increase the city's competitiveness with other large American or world cities.[4]

From 1887 to 1906, rising in the place of what were once blocks of squalor and poverty, eight small parks thrilled the children and the parents of their respective neighborhoods. William H. Seward Park, and its playground, was the sixth small park to open under the Small Parks Act of 1887. Four of the parks (Mulberry Bend, Hudson, Hamilton Fish and William H. Seward Parks), were clustered below 14th Street, where many of the city's newest and poorest immigrants settled in the mid to late 1800's, but the other four (East River, John Jay, DeWitt Clinton and St. Gabriel's Parks) were located next to the East and North (Hudson) Rivers, along Manhattan's perimeters, where the island's pollution was at its worst, rents were at their lowest, and the populations of the poor at their highest, after the area below 14th Street. [Figure 1.0] Each

[3] "Hewitt's Appeal to the Assembly: A Petition to the State for Justice to the City - The Small Parks," *New York Times*, April 21, 1887.

[4] "More Small Parks Wanted: Mayor Hewitt's Regard for the Working People Shown Again," *New York Times*, October 21, 1888, 11.

of these parks and the neighborhoods surrounding them has a unique origin and history. Well-known landscape architects, architects and engineers designed their landscapes, pavilions and gymnasium plans. Designs of these parks fell into one of three landscape ideals: Picturesque, Beaux Arts or the emerging Playground-Recreational design.



[Figure 1.0] Distribution of Small Parks in Manhattan, 1896–1906; on William Piston's "Map of New York City," *Fourth Annual Report of Health of the Health Department of the City of New York: May 1873-April 1874*, New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1874.

The small parks created in New York City were part of a much larger national movement, known as the "Small Parks Movement." Prior to the Small Parks Movement, the Urban Parks Movement began in the mid nineteenth century when, in response to rapid population growth, increasing industrialization, terrible pollution, and sprawling construction of commercial and residential buildings, municipal governments sought to set aside land and create large parks as unpolluted "lungs" for their residents. Perhaps the best-known example of an early large urban park is New York City's Central Park; it was the nation's first when it opened to the public between 1858 and 1860.[5] Other municipalities followed New York's lead and implemented similar large parks in their cities, including San Francisco (Golden Gate Park), Philadelphia

[5] Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park,* New York Cornell University Press, 1992, 8.

(Fairmount Park), Boston (Public Garden, the Emerald Necklace, Olmsted and Back Bay Fens Parks), Chicago (Lincoln Park) and Brooklyn (Prospect Park). Given that locating and purchasing a large parcel of undeveloped land can be challenging, some of these large parks were sited far from the most densely populated regions of these cities, rendering the parks inaccessible to those who did not have the resources or time to journey to and from the park. Many of these large parks, then, became gathering spots for primarily middle and upper class residents who owned private carriages or lived within walking distance of the park.[6]

The eight parks created from the Small Parks Act were part of a larger movement in the United States called the Small Parks Movement; it began in the late 19th century as progressive reformers sought to bring that same access to light, air and better health ("lungs") that the large parks provided to the poor population in their cities, but this time, in the form of small parks located in the middle of densely populated poor neighborhoods. Because of the large influx of immigrants during the late 1800s, large cities' populations grew exponentially fast and city leaders either acted as those in New York City did by condemning land and demolishing slums to create the parks or by purchasing the land outside of the denser city areas and then, protectively zoning it as parklands not to be used otherwise, so that when their populations expanded, those park areas were already set aside. Boston, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia, among other cities, all created a body of small parks during this same period.

Most of the parks created during this period have similar stories to the ones you will read about in this thesis. But, New York City's small parks stand out for their designs, their designers and for their landscape history and park use. Prominent landscape architects, important to landscape history, designed these parks; nationally known architects designed their pavilions and

[6] Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, "The Elite Park: The Great Rendezvous of the Polite World," *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park,* New York: Cornell University Press, 211-237.

gymnasiums. The country's first municipal playground was one of these small parks.

By the 1890s, these neighborhoods, particularly in New York City, had a high percentage of recent immigrants who typically earned low wages and lived in over-crowded slum tenements. This was an era in which middle and upper class citizens were willing to invest in infrastructure, parks, schools, bathhouses and libraries, in an effort to both improve the appearance and marketability of their city as well as the lives of the city's residents.

1.1 Thesis Goals:

This thesis documents the origins of each of New York's eight small parks, their designs and designers, their architecture and architects, and the most significant changes since their inception. Each of these eight parks served, and continues to serve, an important function in their individual neighborhoods, and collectively, to the city of New York. As a collection, they were an early and important contribution to the Small Parks Movement. Reformers at the turn of the 20th century had high hopes invested in the capability of these parks to transform the people and the neighborhoods surrounding them; designed into the parks or adjacent to them were bathhouses, playgrounds, gardening schools, lofty architecture and landscapes and even libraries, all intended to lift up, ennoble and improve the lives of the poor who would use them.

Those the reformers intended to reform had their own say in the development of these parks, as very early in the process of developing these parks, the children and their parents agitated for more playgrounds and less restrictive use of the parks.

Over the last one hundred and ten years or more, since their creation, most of the eight parks have been altered from their original plans at least once. Population shifts from city to suburbs combined with economic downturns left the city with periods of compromised budgets and hampered ability to maintain the parks' landscape and buildings. Wear and tear by man and

nature, growth and loss to landscapes, and changing demands and uses of the parks would leave the parks ravaged at times, and ultimately changed, during the past century. The most significant alterations within the eight small parks occurred during Robert Moses' tenure as Commissioner of the Parks Department. In 1934, when he began, he encountered deteriorating parks and structures, in great part because of the economy and the city's lack of funds for parks maintenance. To repair the parks on a limited budget while bringing them to a condition that would motivate people to use the parks, Moses oversaw Works Progress Administration funded projects that achieved economies of scale by laying asphalt pathways, standardizing playground equipment and replacing worn-out, but architecturally significant bathhouses and gymnasiums with modest, cost effective comfort stations. Under Moses' oversight, the footprints of three parks were changed when the city built Manhattan's western and eastern perimeter highways, and when the city bisected a small park to create a tunnel entrance adjacent to the park.

Despite their changes, many of the eight small parks have retained original elements or structures, some of which are worthy of designation consideration. Five of the parks retain their original footprints, while all eight small parks are still beloved in their respective neighborhoods.

Within this thesis, a careful analysis of each of the eight small parks, with documentation of landscape architects, their plans, architects, their structures, major changes in each park and the recording of important or original elements extant within each park, will generate recommendations protection of what remains, prevention from any further loss to the parks of their land, and for the preservation for what is extant in the eight small parks. By examining the parks' origins and histories, a case will be made for the preservation and possibly, designation, of the parks both individually, and as a collection of parks, important to the history of New York City. This thesis should assist all who seek knowledge of these parks, or who plan preservation,

rehabilitation, restoration or reconstruction work within these parks.

1.11 Note on Park Selection

There were other small parks being designed and built in New York City at about the same time as these eight small parks. To determine which parks were generated from the Small Parks Act, a thorough study was made of the Parks Department's *Parklands Files*, their *Annual Reports*, the *Annual Minutes of the Park Board*, various newspaper articles, landscape journals, magazines, and perhaps most importantly, the city's *Annual Comptroller's Report*. These sources sometimes contradicted each other, including additional parks under the title of "small parks," or sometimes excluding some of the parks included here. Ultimately, the most important criteria to determine inclusion, or not, were the accounting terms and accounts used to pay for the parks' creation. Though no single collection of data gave a clear answer, the combination of the *Minutes of the Park Board* and the *Comptrollers Reports* helped create this list of eight parks. Included in this thesis were only the parks in which these sources sited Chapter 320 of the Laws of 1887, or its ensuing amendments, as either the source of funds or source of authorization for the issuance of bonds used to fund the purchase of land and the subsequent parks' creation.

1.2 Pre-Small Parks Act: History

Prior to the creation of Central Park, New York City did not have a Parks Department, nor did it have an organized collection of parks throughout the city. From its Dutch origins in 1624, to the 1664 British province of New York, to the 1776 American Revolution, New York City has always been a center of commerce, trade and industry, attracting investors, investments and workers. As its population increased, the city expanded northward somewhat haphazardly, during which allocation of land for parks was uncommon. The Battery around the city's fort at its southernmost tip, and church cemeteries were the city's only green spaces.

In 1807, realizing that compromise, negotiation and piecemeal planning was not an effective strategy to deal with the city's largest landholders, the Common Council appealed to the state legislature for help in creating an organized city plan in which they could regulate the city's streets. In response, the legislators appointed three commissioners (Gouverneur Morris, Simeon DeWitt, and John Rutherford) to create a plan for the city that would be "most conducive to the public good."[7] As instructed by the legislature, they produced their 1811 "Commissioners' Plan" which imposed a grid on the city's land south of 155th Street and north of the haphazard street plan already in place in lower Manhattan; their grid did not account for topography nor did it include many potential future public green spaces. The same year, City Surveyor William Bridges produced a map that traced the Commissioners' Plan, but with colors and shading so that the island's topography and parks are more distinguishable. [Figure 1.2] In discussing the surprisingly few vacant spaces set aside for "the benefit of fresh air and consequent preservation of health," the commissioners noted the value of the land for commerce and trade and justified their decision not to add more parks as "proper" and following "the principles of economy." After all, they argued, New York City did not have the Seine or the Thames to view, as its rivers served the "convenience of commerce."[8]

[Figure 1.2] P. Maverick,Engraver, *Map of the City of New York, Island of Manhattan, laid out by Commissioners Appointed by Legislature, April 3, 1807, Respectfully Dedicated to Mayor, Aldermen & Commonality thereof by their most Obedient Servant, William Bridges, New York, 1811*, Library of Congress: Geography & Maps Division

[7] Hilary Ballon, Editor, *The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan 1811-2011,* New York: Museum of the City of New York and Columbia University Press, 2012, 29.

[8] Ballon, 40.

The few vacant spots that the commissioners did set aside for parks included pre-existing parks, such as Bowling Green Park, "The Park" (City Hall Park), Duane Park, Abingdon Square and Hudson Square (later, St. John's Park); but added to their grid were some minimal spaces set aside for future parks or public gatherings; these parks were were not realized. Included in these were an east side market place, Bloomingdale Square, Harlem Square, Hamilton Square and Observatory Place.[9] Two of the commissioners' parks were eventually opened, but with significantly altered dimensions; in place of the "Grand Parade," a scaled down Madison Square Park opened in 1847, and Union Place opened as a public commons beginning in 1815. In addition to the grid's parks, some private parks, such as Gramercy Park (1831) were opened, serving only residents of the buildings surrounding the parks who had a key to access them. Washington Military Parade Ground (now Washington Square Park) was purchased by the city, and converted from a potter's field to a military marching and training area in 1826 (by 1850, it would become a public park). Both Stuyvesant Square (1836) and Tompkins Square (1837) originated as public parks. The 1807 commissioners saw no need for a large park in the city's center. The creation of any of these parks prompted the building of upscale, high demand residences in the neighborhoods surrounding them, built to take advantage of their natural light. The city's poorest would not have had access to, nor been welcome, in most of these parks.

As stated earlier, Central Park was created in the mid-1850s as a beautifully landscaped topography intended to offer the city's residents a healthy breathing spot in which they could escape from the city's industrialization, pollution and noises to a country-like setting. William Cullen Bryant, the editor of the *New York Evening Post* wrote an 1844 editorial proposing a park to serve as the city's "lungs," suggesting that a park's fresh air and the possibility of exercise

[9] Ballon, 105.

within the park might both alleviate some of the population's health issues and improve the behavior of those who might otherwise be amusing themselves in drinking houses.[10] Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, argued that a new park might ennoble the city's citizens. The popular landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing rallied in letters and in an 1848 editorial in his *Horticulture* magazine for a "great public park," writing that "every laborer is a gentleman" when under the influence of a park's bucolic scenery and culture.[11] But, once it was created, Central Park could be or do none of these things for the people who were not able to get to the park. Those without the resources and time to travel to and from the park received no health, cultural or moral benefit from the city's investment. The residents who lived in the city's most densely populated neighborhoods were the city's poorest; it was they who had the least access to medical care and the highest rates of disease and death; it was they who stood to benefit the most from having access to one of the city's "breathing spots."

1.3 Population

During the 19th century, New York City's population mushroomed from 123,706 in 1820 to 1,850,093 in 1900; most of the population increase was attributed to immigration or births to foreign-born parents.[12] The city's newest immigrants squeezed, as they arrived, into densely populated neighborhoods where their language was spoken, most often, south of 14th Street. By 1890, of the city's 1,515,301 residents, foreign-born or native-born residents of foreign parents made up 80% of the city's population. In the wards south of 14th Street, one half of the population was foreign-born, while the native-born offspring of foreign parents amounted to three eighths of the population, and the native born of native parents totaled only one eighth of

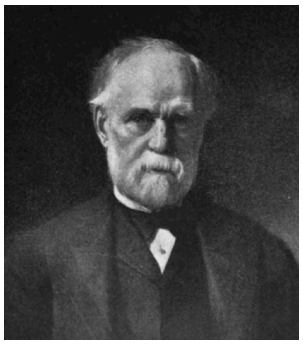
[10] John Berman, *Portraits of America: Central Park*, New York: Museum of the City of New York, Barnes & Noble, 2003, 9.
[11] Berman,10.
[12] Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City,* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972, 36, 58 & 63.

those living in wards south of 14th Street. In the wards north of 14th Street, the population distribution is somewhat different: the foreign-born and the native-born to foreign parents were less than two fifths each, of the population, while the native-born to native parents were more than one fifth of the city's northern population.[13] This statistic suggests that the city's newest immigrants settled south of 14th Street. Once they became established, they moved further north. What is not apparent in these statistics is the flight that occurred during or after major epidemics, such as yellow fever or cholera; those who could afford it, fled the southern wards during health scares, leaving an increased percentage of impoverished residents in the southern wards.

Much of the city's immigrant population was European; their large numbers and housing needs created a profit opportunity for landlords, while their diversity, albeit in the range of European diversity, helped to cement the image of New York City as a "melting pot." From the 1820s through the 1860s, Irish, British and German citizens poured into the city, while the second half of the 19th century brought primarily Italians and Eastern Europeans, many of whom were Jewish. Many immigrants arrived with very little, if any, resources, and quickly settled where they could afford to live. Throughout the century, slum tenement landlords seeking to maximize their income, packed as many people as would fit into their tenements, while collecting rents from residents who did not have the economic choice to move or leave. The conditions of the poorest neighborhoods worsened with each new wave of immigration. Despite the enactment of several tenement laws in the mid-late 19th century, slum tenement landlords made little effort to ensure cleanliness, light, air or water were made available to their tenants.

[13] Kate Holladay Claghorn, Ph.D., "The Foreign Immigrant in New York City," *Reports of the Industrial Commission on Immigration*, XV, Chapter IX, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901, 467, 469.

1.4 Abram Stevens Hewitt



[Figure 1.4] Abram S. Hewitt
1889; Artist: Leon Bonnat
Columbia University

Abram Hewitt (1822-1903) was long aware of the Tenement Committee's struggle to affect change in the city's slums tenements when he became the mayor. [Figure 1.4] His Small Parks Act served two important functions: the new parks brought light, air, nature and potentially better health to poor, densely populated neighborhoods, and it helped improve the city's reputation with the removal of entire blocks of the city's worst slum tenements in order to create room for the new small parks.

Hewitt's opponent in the 1886 race for Mayor, Henry George, whom Hewitt had narrowly beaten in the contest, represented the rapidly growing labor class. An important component of George's campaign had been his rally for even the "commonest necessities of life." George argued that the rich could go to Central Park, or anywhere else, but the poor, and their children, had "no playground in the city but the streets." Hewitt realized that the poor would support politically anyone who promised them improvements in their daily lives, and was aware of potential political problems inherent in their easy persuasion. Though Hewitt was not keen on the idea of issuing bonds for luxuries such as parks, he felt it was the duty of the city "to provide at least as many facilities for the poor as it does for the rich."[14]

Hewitt was important element to the success of the Small Parks Act; he brought the Act to the New York state legislature in 1887; his own life experiences likely influenced his motivation for doing so and his persistence in bringing the idea to fruition. Though the first small park created from the law was not opened until ten years after the passage of the Small

[14] Roy Rosenzweig & Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992, 304-305.

Parks Act, Hewitt continued to advocate for the parks' creation until they were built.

An exceptionally bright and conscientious young man whose cabinetmaker father was swindled out of his modest life savings in an investment scheme; Hewitt was admitted to Columbia University with an academic scholarship. He graduated valedictorian in 1842, after which, in gratitude, he taught math for Columbia, refusing a salary. When he wed the sister of a college friend, he became Peter Cooper's son-in-law; together, they developed their iron and steel business, making Hewitt a wealthy man while adding substantially more to Cooper's wealth. Hewitt was civic-minded; serving several years in the United States Congress, he learned about politics, corruption, and the art of getting bills passed. Mindful of his own modest childhood, he was charitable and accessible to his constituents, yet always practical and often diligent about money. His small parks gave an opportunity for a healthier life to the city's poor.[15]

1.5 The Small Parks Act: 1887

Chapter 320 of the Laws of New York of 1887 allocated $1,000,000 annually to be used for the creation of new small parks in densely populated neighborhoods south of 155th Street. The act gave the power to approve potential parks sites to the Board of Street Opening and Improvements. The Board consisted of the Mayor, the Comptroller, the Commissioner of Public Works, the President of the Department of Public Parks and the President of the Board of Alderman. Of these Board members, the Mayor, the Comptroller and the Alderman were elected officials, while the Public Works Commissioner and Public Parks President were appointed positions. The law also gave power to three Board-appointed Commissioners of Estimate, who were to be approved by a special term of the New York Supreme Court.[16] Commissioners and

[15] Alan Nevins, *Abram S. Hewitt, with Some Account of Peter Cooper,* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935.

[16] See Appendix A for a copy of Chapter 320, Laws of 1887, and its subsequent amendments; Chapter 69, Laws of 1895, and Chapter 295, Laws of 1896. See also, in Appendix A, Article 426, Chapter 378, Laws of 1897, which as a

Board members were due to change at least every few years, so the effectiveness of the Board and commissioners depended entirely on who its members were. When Abram Hewitt was on the Board, his team was motivated, but when Tammany Hall returned to power, the Board and the commissioners languished and accomplished very little in acquiring land for the new parks.

In its first two years, the Board focused on the city's poorest, most populated regions. Relying heavily on the city's Health Department statistics, which detailed density, illness and death by ward, the commissioners strategically pursued locations for these new small parks in the city's densest and most disease-ridden neighborhoods.[17] For each prospective lot included in a proposed park location, the commissioners were to make a "just and equitable estimate of the loss and damage to the respective owners, lessees, parties and persons" and submit their report to New York's Supreme Court.[18] At least thirty days before submitting their estimates to the Court, the commissioners were to file copies of their reports with the city's Department of Public Parks and give daily notice in the *City Record* and two other public newspapers. If any property owner objected to the taking of their land, they had to file an objection with the commissioners within those thirty days; the commissioners were required to hear their objections. If a property owner could not obtain relief from the commissioners, he, she or they had the right to pursue the matter in the courts. Barring these measures, a property, once condemned, taken and paid for, would be become part of the Parks Department; they were to raze any existing buildings, then design, develop and construct a new small park.

Chapter 320's directive to the Parks Department was fairly concise; they were to be "vested with the care, custody and construction of said parks" and were to

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result of the Consolidation of New York City shifted these same powers from the Board of Street Openings and Improvements to the Board of Public Improvements.

[17] *Article 1, Chapter 320, Laws of 1887, New York State General Statutes, May 13, 1887.*

[18] *Article 2, Chapter 320, Laws of 1887, New York State General Statutes, March 1887.*

> …erect and furnish therein for public purposes, for the comfort, health and instruction of the people, such and so many buildings as the said department of public parks with the concurrence of the board of estimate and apportionment, shall determine necessary and expedient.

However, "no contract" was to have been entered into or

> … liability incurred for the construction of any of said parks, or for the erection of any building therein, until the plans for such construction … and in the case of a building, an estimate of the cost thereof, shall have been prepared by the department of public parks and submitted to and approved by the board of estimate and apportionment.[19]

For their work, commissioners were entitled to compensation of up to ten dollars per day as well as reimbursement for any "reasonable expenses" incurred in preparing their reports, such as maps, surveys or clerks hired.[20] All of the expenses for the small parks, including fees for the commissioners, land, razing and removal of old building materials, site work, landscape and architecture design and construction costs were not to exceed one million dollars in any one calendar year. There was no limit stated in Chapter 320 on how many years this fund could be expended, nor a definition of what features the parks were to have, nor design styles they should follow, nor any other targets or measureable goals of success. There was also no mention of who was to design the landscape plans of the parks or the buildings therein, and no where in the Small Parks Act appeared the words "play," "playground" or "children."

Absent a specific directive in the Act regarding design, the Parks Department's landscape architects designed most of the new parks' landscapes, but the buildings and gymnasiums in the parks were all designed by well-known architects, seemingly randomly chosen, without competitions or prior submissions of plans. The architects' names were first introduced in the *Minutes* of the Parks Commissioners' meetings, when it was noted plans were being prepared or put out to bid with contractors. In contrast, contractors went through a standardized bidding

[19] Ibid, *Articles 9 & 10.*

[20] Ibid, *Article 7.*

process, as they still do today; the building contract was always awarded to the lowest bidder.[21]

The park designs reflected the emerging national discussion and changing preferences in parks design and planning. Typologies of small park design will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3, and in each individual park's chapter. The first two parks were laid out in a naturalistic or romantic style, intended for promenading, sitting, reading and general relaxation. Two parks were designed as formal gardens with parterres, reflecting ponds and Beaux Arts temple-like structures made popular during the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition. These parks were also intended for promenading, but their fenced in landscaping frustrated the children who tried to play in them. The last four parks, designed as playground parks with varying levels of landscape features, reflected the pressure that playground advocates strenuously placed on the Parks Department. Because the Small Parks Act did not specify the design or use of these parks, it presented a challenge both for those who designed the parks and for those who wanted children to exercise in them. In a *New York Tribune* interview two days after the passage of the Small Parks Act, Mayor Hewitt clarified his intention for the layout of these new parks:

> …lay them out into lawns and paths, planting them with carefully selected trees, shrubs and flowers as are best adapted to city life, and providing them with fountains and with means of holding occasional outdoor concerts, and with large spaces specially provided as playground for children. I would also, from time to time, proceeding in a conservative way, erect buildings along the exterior lines of these parks for lecture rooms, restaurants, circulating libraries, and hot and cold baths.[22]

The site identified for the first new park was located between Mulberry, Baxter, Park and Bayard Streets. An example of one of the city's worst slum neighborhoods, the block was located adjacent to the notorious Five Points, where five street corners met and gangs, thugs and crime dominated the turf, making life for the poor who lived there even more challenging.

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[21] *Minutes & Documents of the Board of Commissioners of the Dept. of Parks,* NY: Martin B. Brown, 1887-1907.

[22] "More Parks for the Poor: Needs of the Tenement District," *New York Tribune,* May 15, 1887, 9.

Obtaining properties through condemnation, assessment and purchase proved to be much more difficult than Hewitt had imagined, so the work moved very slowly. Tenement owners resisted, negotiated, manipulated and fought for higher prices for their buildings and valuable land. They were being forced to give up their investment income, and they proved to be worthy opponents of the city in battle for their assets. Ultimately, the land for the first park alone cost the city over $1,500,000, before the cost of razing existing tenements or construction of the park.[23] Repeatedly, throughout the next nineteen years, the city would face the same hurdles. The residents wanted the parks, but the owners did not want to let go of their investment; the conflict drove up prices for the parks. As a result, the $1,000,000 a year allocated in the Small Parks Act, that seemed so generous in 1887, proved to be insufficient.

In attempting to pay for the land for Mulberry Bend Park, the City Comptroller Ashbel Fitch and Corporate Counsel William Clark ran into difficulties. First, Article 8 of Chapter 320 allowed the city to assess the property owners, occupants, proprietors or "parties interested in land and premises deemed to be benefited from the acquisition and construction of said public parks."[24] But, the neighboring property owners, proprietors and tenants, represented by several lawyers, rigorously complained about the assessment; an arbitrary figure of 30% had been chosen as their assessment by the Board of Street Opening and Improvement, which given the over $1,500,000 cost of acquiring the land for the park, represented an assessment of more than $450,000 to the park's neighbors.[25] Eventually, the state legislature would correct this by passing an amendment in Chapter 526 of the Laws of 1893, which relieved adjoining property owners of

[23] The cost of land for Mulberry Bend Park was $1,522,055.60; "Mulberry Bend Park Land Cost More Than the Annual Budget for Acquiring Land for Parks," *New York Times*, December 8, 1894.

[24] Article 8, *Chapter 320, Laws of the State of New York,* May 13, 110th Session of the Legislature, City of Albany; Albany: Banks & Brothers, Publishers, 1887, 316-7.

[25] "Owners Around Mulberry Bend Park Want the City to Pay the Whole Cost," *New York Times,* January 21, 1893.

any potential assessments.[26] While the public demanded their new parks, the Counsel and the Comptroller still had the problem of the law's $1,000,000 annual expenditure limit; the law prohibited them from paying the property owners more than the limit. The problem of payment languished unsolved, with the owners unpaid, until the legislature revisited the law and amended Article 10, with Chapter 69 of the Laws of 1895, in which they directed the city's Comptroller to issue interest bearing bonds or stocks, not to exceed a 4% rate of return, to cover the cost of park lands' acquisition, design and construction exceeding one million dollars per year.[27]

1.6 Sub-Committee on Small Parks – The Committee of Seventy: 1894

By 1894, almost eight years after the passage of the Small Parks Act, no small park had yet opened. Land had been acquired for one park, but the city had not yet razed the buildings and instead, operated as a slumlord, taking rents from tenants still living in the tenements. These were years when Tammany backed men ran the city and work on reform projects was stalled. Tired of watching the corrupt management of Tammany's administration, the "Committee of Seventy," a group of well-educated and well-connected middle and upper class men formed sub-committees to investigate, write and publish reports on various areas in the city that they found wanting.[28] Among those committees foci were Tenement House Reform, Garbage Disposal, Pay Rolls, Public Baths and Lavatories, Civil Service, Public Schools, Street Cleaning, Sanitation, Waterfront Improvement and Small Parks.[29] The reports they prepared were published to expose

[26] "Mulberry Park Bend Property: The Corporate Counsel Tells the Comptroller that the Conditions Affecting Payment are Puzzling," *New York Times,* December 8, 1894, 3; & "Chapter 526," *Laws of the State of New York*, May 2, 1893, 116th Session of the Legislature, City of Albany; Albany: James B Lyon, Printer, 1893, 1123. See Appendix A, page 7, for Chapter 526.

[27] "Chapter 69," *Laws of the State of New York*, March 4, 1895, 118th Session of the Legislature, City of Albany; Albany: James B Lyon, Printer, 1895, 61-62. See also Appendix A, 7 for a copy of Chapter 69.

[28] The Committee of Seventy initially banded together in 1871 to carefully research, document and expose the corruptions of Tammany Hall and specifically, Boss Tweed. Tweed was convicted of theft from New York City of more than $25 million in 1877, and died in the Ludlow Street Jail in 1878.

[29] "Working for Reforms-Sub Committee of Seventy to Consider Local Questions: Small Parks Subcommittee and

the deficits of the Tammany administration and proved instrumental in the election of Fusion Party reform candidate William Strong.

The "Sub-Committee on Small Parks" published its report in 1895. [Figure 1.6] The report stated that the "Law of 1887, known as the Small Parks Law, which was intended to give needed relief to those congested districts, has failed of its purpose, the net result of such relief of seven years effort under this measure being one park, Mulberry Bend Park, which is as yet only on paper."[30] The report urged the immediate construction of Mulberry Bend Park, and noted the concern of the committee that the other two existing proposed park sites, for Hudson Park and East River Park, would not offer relief to densely crowded districts, as they were sited in semi-populated blocks (in fact, one was a cemetery). They proposed that all future public schools be built with playgrounds; that the $1,000,000 annual small parks budget under Chapter 320, Laws of 1887 be made cumulative (eight years had passed since the Act was passed, and with it, an opportunity to spend nearly eight million dollars on new parks); and finally, they recommended that the mayor appoint a small parks "advisory committee" to help him locate additional park sites.[31]

[Figure 1.6] E. L. Godkin, *Triumph of Reform: History of the Great Political Revolution November 6,1894,* New York: Souvenir Pub, 1895, 20-22.

Names," *New York Times*, December 4, 1894, 16.

[30] *New York City Landmark Preservation Commission Designation Report: Hamilton Fish Park Play Center*, Report prepared by Andrew S. Dolkart, New York: New York City Landmark Preservation Commission, 1982, 2.

[31] Committee of Seventy, *Report of Sub-Committee on Small Parks,* New York: Committee of Seventy, 1895.

1.8 Report of the Committee on Small Parks: 1897

When William Strong was elected Mayor in 1895, the site for Mulberry Bend Park was still the only land acquired to date, but no work had been started to develop the park. The city's attempt to condemn and purchase the second park site was legally challenged by the owner and the city and owner were in litigation.[32] Strong was elected after six years of Tammany rule that included a significant economic depression in 1893; Tammany administrators did not care much for the small parks idea and did little to promote the implementation of the 1887 law. In addition, the unemployment and lost assets of 1893 resulted in a sharply reduced tax base for the city, constricting available funds for parks works. Strong's administration instituted two years of reform in the city, including a re-focus on creating Hewitt's small parks. Following the suggestions of the Sub-Committee on Small Parks, Strong appointed a Small Parks Advisory Committee, to which he named Abram Hewitt the Chairman, Jacob Riis the Secretary, and with the President of the Board of Health and the President of the Park Board, he appointed six other prominent citizens.[33] Their job was to recommend specific park sites to the Mayor and the Board of Street Openings and Improvements.[34] This was Hewitt's chance to set the record straight: his intention for these parks was for them to serve both to remove blight from the city and as a place for children to become healthier through organized play. He and his committee stressed in their 1897 *Report* that the city was ignoring its children and needed to invest in their well being by creating safe places to run, breath and play.[35]

Following closely the 1894 report of the Health Department of New York City, in which

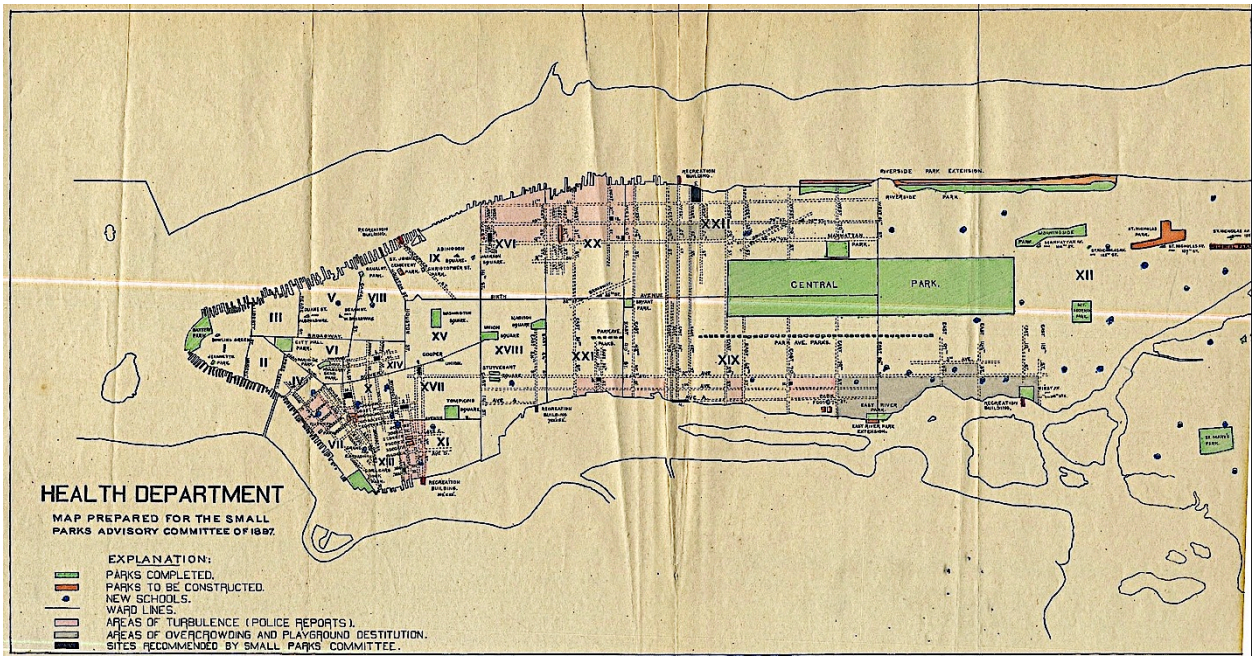
[32] For more information on the legal battle over the second park site, please read about Hudson Park in Chapter 6.1.

[33] "Introduction Letter," *Report of the Committee on Small Parks,* City of New York, 1897, Martin B. Brown Company, 6; committee members: Abram Hewitt, DeWitt Seligman, John Devins, Myer Isaacs, James Higginson, William Stewart, Joseph Bryant, Charles Wilson (ex-officio, Health) and Samuel McMillan (ex-officio, Parks).

[34] Please see Appendix B for 1897 *Report of the Committee on Small Parks* and its accompanying map.

[35] Abram Hewitt & Jacob Riis, *Report of the Committee on Small Parks, City of New York, 1897*, NY: Martin B. Brown Company, 1897, 2.

population density, acreage, density per acre, disease, death and death rates of children under the age of five were given by ward, they recommended ideal park sites in the wards with the highest population densities and the highest death rates of children. They published their report with an accompanying map showing the city's existing parks (green), parks to be constructed (gold), areas of "turbulence" (pink) and recommended sites for new park locations (black). [Figure 1.8] The suggested park sites were clustered below 14th Street and along the perimeters of Manhattan.



[Figure 1.8] *Health Department: Map Prepared for the Small Parks Advisory Committee of 1897,* New York: Martin B. Brown Company, 1897.

In their detailed report, the Advisory Committee emphasized that the city's most densely populated areas were in desperate need of the "breathing spaces" that small parks could provide and that not only should the process of acquisition and construction of parks begin right away, but that the city should also provide a playground in every park to help the children of these districts become healthier, happier and more productive citizens of New York City.[36]

Though Mulberry Bend Park, the first small park created by the 1887 law, opened in

[36] Abram Hewitt & Jacob Riis, *Report of Committee on Small Parks,* City of New York, 1897, New York: Martin B. Brown Company, 1897.

1897, when Strong was mayor; the remaining seven parks would open under Strong's successors. Strong's administration oversaw the acquisition of park sites for Hudson Park in 1896, and for Hamilton Fish and William H. Seward Park, both in 1897. In addition, they initiated the acquisition of additional park sites, at or very near the locations recommended by his Advisory Committee, as did two of his successors, Mayors Robert Van Wyck and Seth Low. Former president of Columbia University and co-founder of 1891 New York Society of Parks and Playgrounds (with Hewitt and 1910 Parks Commissioner, Charles Stover), Mayor Low officially opened the Nation's first municipal playground as discussed in the Introduction.

Small Parks were not the only instrument of reform implemented by New York City's Progressive era reformers between 1887 and 1906. Many of Hewitt's ideas about the ideal park mentioned in his May 15, 1887 interview with the *New York Tribune* would come to bear, as other reform movements joined with the small parks movement as a method of implementing their own agendas into the city's evolving cityscape. By 1906, all of the small parks would have playgrounds, some would have farm gardens, many would have bathhouses and gymnasiums and many would have neighborhood libraries sited alongside or adjacent to the new parks.

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2.0 Small Parks and Progressive Reform

"Attention was first called to the great need of parks in tenement districts by the Tenement House Commission appointed in 1884."[1] State appointed Tenement House Commissions had been meeting since 1856 to investigate the housing conditions of the city's poor. Their investigations led to a series of Tenement laws in 1862, 1867 and 1879, as well as an amendment in 1887, and later again in 1895.[2] These laws had no appreciable effect on the slums as the laws concerned primarily new construction. Most slum landlords avoided repairs or improvements on their buildings, and instead, focused on their investments' rate of return by packing greater numbers of tenants in their old tenements every year. Rapid population growth in the 1880s worsened the slum situation; in 1880, the city's population was just above 800,000, but by 1887, it had nearly doubled to almost 1.5 million.[3] Immigrants poured into the United States throughout the 19th century; more than 50% of them stayed in New York City, but the 1880's brought a new resurgence in immigration; in 1882 alone 788,992 people immigrated into the United States.[4] The 1884 Tenement Commission was frustrated at its inability to effect change in the slums, but their idea of razing entire slum blocks to insert new parks was one that citizens could embrace and support. When Mayor Hewitt introduced the Small Parks Act to the legislature, he spoke of bringing sunlight, fresh air and better health to the poorest tenement districts, but he also wanted to protect the city's image as a highly desirable place to visit, work and live. Both of these goals could be met in the new small parks. Because the first small park

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[1] Andrew Dolkart, *Biography of a Tenement House in New York City: An Architectural History of 97 Orchard Street,* Santa Fe: The Center for American Places, 2007, 16; and, Robert DeForest & Lawrence Veiller, "Parks and Playgrounds for Tenement Districts," *The Tenement House Problem: Including the Report of the New York State Tenement House Commission of 1900, Volume II*, New York: Macmillan Co, 1903, 8.

[2] Lawrence Veiller, *Tenement House Reform in New York 1834-1900,* New York: The Evening Post Printing House, 1900, 8, 17, 25, 31 and 35.

[3] "Population of New York City 1790 to 1894," *Department of Health, City of New York, Annual Report 1894*, 143

[4] Ibid, 77.

would not open for another ten years, it gave time to other reformers who, like Hewitt, looked for solutions to slow or stop the city's growth of poverty, disease and slum housing. Other reformers would ultimately align their proposals of public bathhouses, playgrounds, neighborhood libraries, and improved and increased numbers of public schools with the small parks movement.

Perhaps more than any other American city in the late 19th century, New York City attracted both the rich and the poor; both were willing to take a risk in pursuit of success. New York City's geography made it an ideal transportation center and an efficient place to do business. With its deep-water harbor, rivers on the east and west, multiple train connections and fresh water from the old (1842) and new (1890) Croton Aqueducts, it attracted both entrepreneurs and laborers. Because it was also the first American port for many European ships, it became the last stop and the new home for many immigrants. The poorest of these immigrants became the city's newest laborers, if they could find work. Edward Glaeser, Harvard economist and author of *Triumph of the City*, argues that poor immigrants will tolerate undesirable living conditions in a city that offers them the potential for success; they think of it as an investment in their own futures. Likewise, large cities benefit from unskilled inexpensive immigrant labor forces; "cities are good for immigrants and immigrants are good for cities."[5]

2.1 Unhealthy Living Conditions

As stated earlier, the city's population escalated rapidly throughout the 19th century. Recent immigrants and native poor with the least amount of resources moved into slum tenements, the worst among them lacked plumbing, heat or water, and afforded their tenants no access to windows, fresh air or natural light. Their rents stretched the tenants financially and left

[5] Edward Glaeser, *Triumph of the City: How our Greatest Invention Makes us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier and Happier,* New York: Penguin Press, 2011, 252.

them with no disposable income with which to access medical care, if needed. Denied access to light and air by living in these packed slum tenements, the city's poorest residents were highly susceptible to disease introduced into their stifled surroundings; over-worked, under-fed and under-paid, the city's poorest and the new immigrants were left with no resistance to disease. Each epidemic that raged through the tenements, whether tuberculosis, yellow fever, chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, typhoid fever, cholera, dysentery or the whooping cough left the city's poor population ravaged. The poor who immigrated to New York City quickly found themselves surrounded by squalor, disease and death.

Statistics in the *Annual Reports of the Health Department for the City of New York*, especially those statistics given by ward, reveal terrible tragedies endured by new immigrants.[6] According to their *1894 Annual Report*, children under the age of five made up over 40% of all deaths in the city from 1885 to 1894.[7] On average, the more densely populated the ward, the greater the percentage loss of young children. Their deaths were mostly the result of disease, but many were injured by horses or in accidents out on the streets where they played. There were few, if any, parks for children to play in, so most of them played on the street, in empty lots or in back alleys. Before the tenement laws, many slum tenement owners, seeking to maximize their incomes, built secondary structures in what would have been the backyards of their tenements. These secondary structures lacked light or air, and were encapsulated in the refuse of the tenements that surrounded them; those living there were the most exposed to filth and disease.

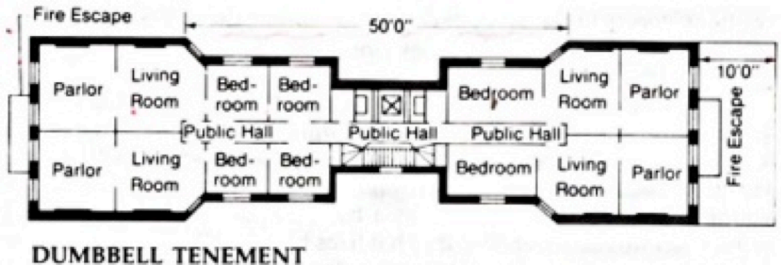
2.2 Tenement Reform & Laws

State legislators were well aware of the problems with the slum tenements and their

[6] *The Annual Report of the Department of Health of the City of New York Ending December 31, 1894*, New York: Martin B. Brown Company, 1897, 144-145.

[7] *The Annual Report of the Department of Health-1894*, 11.

thoughtless owners; in an effort to force improvement in the slums, New York state legislators passed the first Tenement Act in 1867.[8] The Act prohibited cellar apartments unless the ceiling of the apartment cleared the street level by a minimum of one foot, required installation of one toilet for every 20 residents and installation of exterior fire escapes. An 1879 amendment to the Tenement Act (referred to now as the "old law"), set maximum lot coverage at 65% as a method of preventing the construction of secondary structures located behind tenements on the same lots. Sadly, both of these laws applied only to new construction, so despite the efforts of Tenement Commissions and legislators, tenement owners would not make repairs or upgrades on their old buildings in slum neighborhoods. To try to improve the design of tenements by adding light and air within the buildings, while still meeting the owner's objective of profit maximization, *Plumber and Sanitary Engineer* held a contest for a new tenement design.[9] James Ware won the contest with his "dumbbell tenement"; his design became the new standard. [Figure 2.2] Ware's dumbbell proved to be problematic, as tenants would use their airshafts as a place to throw refuse, causing inaccessible piles of putrid, and sometimes flammable, refuse, while not providing the chief objectives of most Tenement Commissions: additional light or air in the tenements. An 1887 amendment required one privy to be built in the tenement interiors for every 15 residents who lived there. The amendment also provided for a permanent Tenement House Commission to be composed of the Mayor and the Directors of the



[Figure 2.2] Dumbbell Tenement; James Ware's design
America: Past and Present, Volume 2, Eighth Edition, 1879, 542

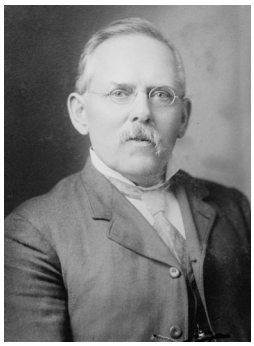
[8] Lawrence Veiller, *Tenement House Reform in New York 1834-1900,* New York: The Evening Post Printing House, 1900, 8.

[9] *Plumber and Sanitary Engineer, II,* March, 1879, 90.

Board of Health, Public Works and Street Cleaning.[10] Finally, the Tenement House Act of 1901 defined "new law" tenements. It detailed fire safety requirements, particularly on staircase enclosures, fire escapes, building materials, lot coverage allowances, open-yard requirements, minimum room size dimensions, windows requirements, and room-by-room light and ventilation specifications.[11]

All of these laws would go a long way to create better housing for future New Yorkers, but little, if anything, the tenement reformers did could affect change in the slum tenements. Therefore, the suggestion by the 1884 Tenement Commission that the city condemn the blocks of tenements and in their place, build parks, was an idea well received by all who sought change in the city's slum dwellings.

2.3 Muckrakers: Jacob Riis



[Figure 2.3]
Jacob A. Riis
National Endowment
of the Arts

Late 19th century New York City saw the rise of a new kind of journalism: muckraking. Tired of the corruption, greed and lack of social responsibility that they witnessed around them, muckrakers were those who exposed, sometimes in shocking fashion, improprieties, inequalities and unethical practices in all walks of life. Jacob Riis, a journalist and immigrant from Denmark, was a police reporter in the Mulberry Bend slum district for the *New York Tribune*, where "290,000 people packed into one square mile of land…in wretched squalor and foul, overcrowded tenements"; there, "Riis observed scenes of suffering which…made him a lifelong advocate of reform."[12] [Figure 2.3]

[10] Veiller, 31.

[11] "Tenement House Act 1901," *Revised Statutes, Codes & General Laws-State of New York,* NY: Baker, Voorhis & Co, 1905, 931-957.

[12] James B. Lane, "Jacob A Riis and Scientific Philanthropy during the Progressive Era," *Social Service Review, 47:1, March 1973,* 32.

Historian James Lane wrote about the evolution of Jacob Riis during the Progressive Era and his shifting views regarding the interrelationship of scientific philanthropy and urban reform. In the early 1880s, Riis supported the so-called "scientific method" of charity organizations, such as that employed by the New York Charity Organization Society, of investigation, coordination and cooperation as a method to help impoverished slum dwellers. By the early 1890s, Riis shifted his views toward environmental determinism, where one believes that the environment one lives and works in contributes significantly to the formation of one's character. Riis believed that a "decent environment was necessary to allow the goodness in a man to blossom."[13] It was during this period when Riis detailed the living conditions for the poor in the city's slum tenements in his 1889 *Scribner's Magazine* expose, "How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements." Riis shocked affluent New Yorkers with his drawings (from photographs) of the city's immigrant poor in horrific, squalid living conditions.[14] He argued that living conditions in the slums (and the owners who refused to repair or improve their buildings) caused tenants' bad behavior, as the environment inside the tenements where so many lived without access to light, air, water or sanitation, were the roots of darkness and evil, and that their condition could never produce anything other than ruffian children, juvenile delinquents and vagabonds.[15]

Alan Trachtenberg, Professor Emeritus of American Studies and English at Yale University, wrote an analysis of Riis' style and effectiveness in using photojournalism to force the subject of slum tenements into the public eye:

> Riis's purpose was to make you see it, see and touch it, as a personal event – though artfully distanced and mediated by his own picturing. Accompanied by photographs, his stories and books represented the slum as the antithesis of the home, a breeding ground of

[13] Lane, 40.

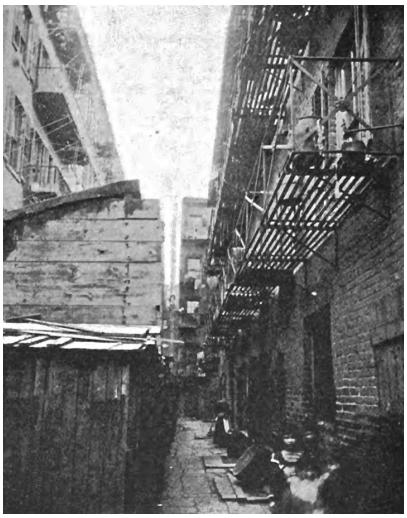
[14] Jacob A. Riis, "How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements," *Scribner's Magazine,* VI: 6, December 1889, 643-662. This article was included in Riis' book by same name, published in 1890.

[15] Ibid.

menacing ignorance and discontent. By word and picture, Riis portrayed the slum as an offense to all notions of the clean, the sanitary, and the civilized."[16]

After publishing his first expose on slum life, Riis quickly became a leading voice in what he called the "battle against the slums." Riis served on the Committee of Seventy's Sub-Committee on Small Parks and on Mayor Strong's Small Parks Advisory Committee in 1897, and wrote several subsequent books and articles on the transformation of the neighborhoods and the people, once parks had replaced the slums.[17] [Figure 2.31-2.34] His books drew so much attention at the time, that even the President of the Police Commission, Theodore Roosevelt, befriended him. Both men would remain progressive reformers for the rest of their lives.

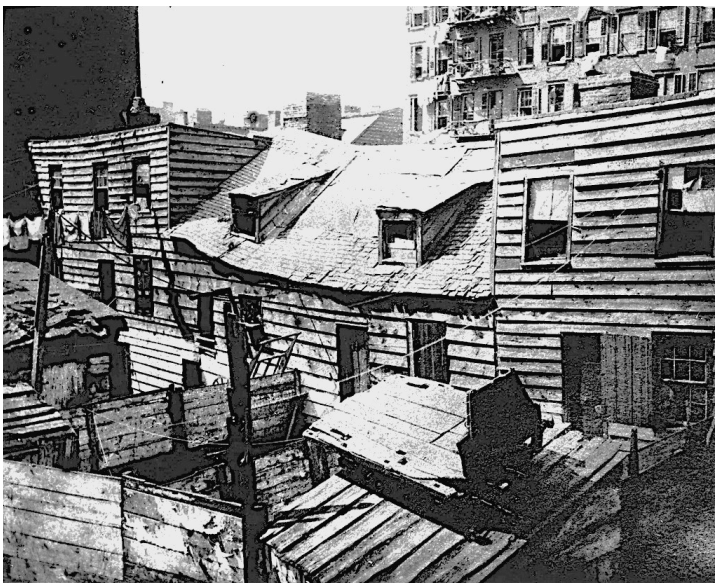
Today's reader of Riis' work might find him pedantic and racist, especially when he devotes entire chapters to writing caricatures of Jews, Italians, and Irish who lived in the slum tenements. But Riis wrote for a targeted audience, the middle and upper classes, and his intention was to identify with them, and then, shock them into caring or action. Careful reading of his texts reveals his empathy for his subjects.

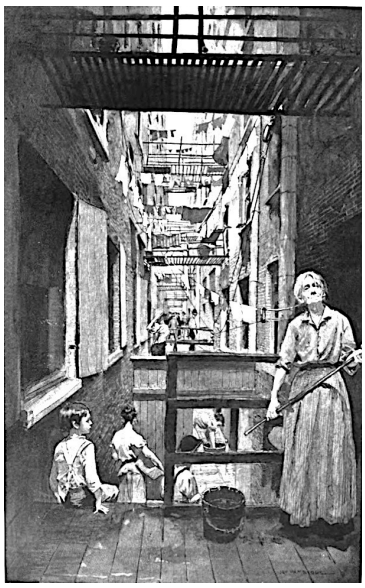


[Figure 2.31, 2.32] "The Mulberry Bend" "Bone Alley"
Jacob Riis, "Letting in the Light," *The Battle with the Slum*, NY: MacMillan, 1902, 277 and 280.

[16] Trachtenberg, Alan, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age,* New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, 2007, 127.

[17] Jacob A. Riis, *The Battle with the Slum,* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1902.





[Figure 2.33, 2.34] Both: Jacob Riis, *Dens of Death The Mott Street Barracks*, "Light in Dark Places," *The Battle with the Slum*, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1902, 21. *The Century*, 53:2, December 1896, 246.

2.4 The Notion of Small Parks as Breathing Spaces

Small Park reformers frequently used terms such as "breathing spaces", "lungs" or "light and air" to describe their goals in the creation of the new small parks. Frederick Law Olmsted, the co-creator of Central Park, summed up what would become one of the reformer's goals in new small parks, in an 1880 lecture, in which he quoted Ceasare Beccaria's 1764 essay on *The Means of Preventing Crimes*: "any innocent amusement," that gathered "human life" in an "open landscape or viewing … the meadows of a city park" would "weaken the dangerous inclinations of the lesser classes."[18] Olmsted had long asserted the power of landscapes and open spaces to affect human happiness and mental stability.[19] The small parks reformers co-opted Olmsted's ideas of nature's counterforce to "dangerous inclinations" when they suggested that the parks themselves might prevent slum children from becoming juvenile delinquents. Not long after the

[18] Frederick Law Olmsted, " Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns," *Public Parks: Being Two Papers Read Before the American Social Science Association in 1870 and 1880,* Brookline, MA, 1902, 109-10

[19] Frederick Law Olmsted, "A Preliminary Report upon the Yosemite and Big Tree Grove," *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Volume V: The California Frontier, 1863-1865,* (Victoria Post Ranney, Ed), Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, 502-503.

Small Parks Act was passed by the legislature, Abram Hewitt expressed his own concern about the habits of young men on the street, "I have just received a letter from a boy who wants to know where he can play ball…if a boy cannot amuse himself properly, he is bound to do so improperly…we have some boys of 17 or 18 years of age, shooting policemen, and I must say that my sympathies are rather with the boys."[20] The reformers idealized that the futures of these children might be improved were they given opportunities to play cooperatively in parks, rather than learning to be criminals on the streets.

2.5 Small Parks as agent against Tenement Slums

The 1884 Tenement House Commission, chaired by Richard Watson Gilder, filed a six hundred page report with the New York state legislature on January 17, 1895 in which the Commission discussed public indignation on the condition of the city's slum tenements. They demanded solutions or change.[21] Comparing the general density of Manhattan (143.2 persons per acre) to the slum tenement wards' densities (11th ward had 986.4 persons per acre), the report noted that even a poor district in Bombay had a lower population density (Koombarwara district = 759.66 persons per acre) than the poorest areas in New York City.[22] The report itemized the recommendations of the Commission to help the state clean up New York City's slums.[23] Recommendation number twelve called for a bill compelling the Board of Street Opening and Improvement to locate and begin construction of small parks within three years.[24] In *Washing the Great Unwashed: Public Baths in Urban America, 1840-1920,* Marilyn Williams discussed the

[20] Trials of the Small Boy, *New York Times,* August 27, 1887.

[21] Rosamond Gilder, Editor, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder,* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916, 262.

[22] Mel Scott, *American City Planning Since 1890: A History Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the American Institute of Planners*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, 10.

[23] Tenement House Committee, "Recommendations to the NY Legislature on Tenement Housing in NY," *Consular Reports, Congressional edition*, XLVIII: 178, DC: Government Printing Office, July 1895, 460-472.

[24] Ibid, 465.

Commission's findings:

> …of the city's slum population of 255,033 people, only 306 had access to bathrooms in their dwelling places ... stressing the importance of cleanliness to health and to the prevention of disease…that "several hundred thousand people in the city have not proper facilities for keeping their bodies clean is a disgrace to the city and to the civilization of the nineteenth century."

The Commission also recommended that moderately priced bathing establishments be opened in the crowded districts."[25] To its credit, the legislature put into effect or law all recommendations of the Tenement Commission.

2.6 Bathhouses

The 1894-1895 investigations by the Committee of Seventy explored several areas of concern or deficit within New York City. One such area concerned the personal hygiene of the city's poorest. The fifteen-page report by their Sub-Committee on Baths and Lavatories' found that New York was lagging far behind other American and European cities. They recommended the building of at least six public baths in tenement neighborhoods with forty showers per bathhouse.[26] This committee would have enormous influence and accomplish what Dr. Simon Baruch, the long time physician advocate of public baths (and widely acknowledged as "the father of the public bath movement in the United States") had been unable to do after many years of agitating for baths for the poor.[27] He associated cleanliness with better health, and not unlike the charity reformers of the 1880s and 1890s, Baruch felt that building public baths in slum tenement areas would both "reform the slum environment and the character of the individual." After his election, Mayor Strong recruited the Sub-Committee on Baths and Lavatories as his

[25] Marilyn Thornton Williams, *Washing "The Great Unwashed": Public Baths in Urban America, 1840-1920,* Columbus: University of Ohio Press, 1991, 45. Here, Williams quotes R.W. Gilder from Tenement House Committee of 1894, *Report,* 49 & 75.

[26] Williams, 48-50.

[27] Williams, 42.

Advisory Committee of the same name. Ultimately, four of the nineteen bathhouses built before 1915 were built either in the new small parks or next to them.[28] [Figure 2.6]

In several small parks, including Seward Park, Public Bath advocates arguing for the need of free public baths in neighborhoods lacking access to water, based their argument on the correlation between cleanliness and health. They were successful in persuading the Parks Department to design bathhouses into four of its new small parks, most of which resembled Classical temples. [Figure 2.61]

[Figure 2.6] "Public Baths of Manhattan 1915," M.T. Williams, *Washing the "Great Unwashed,"* 63. Locations 8, 9, 13 & 16 were sited in or adjacent to a new small park.

[Figure 2.61] "Seward Park Playground; Best Equipped in the World," Berthe Smith, *Munsey's Magazine*, May 1904, 293.

Given that most of the people who lived in the slum tenements did not have access to baths or showers in their homes, the public baths provided them with a reasonable way to wash

[28] Williams, 25 & 62.

themselves and their families. Of the eight small parks, three would have bathhouses designed into them or adjacent to them at their opening. All four of the small park's bathhouses were designed by well known architects of the day, and all of them were open air structures built on raised basements, in which segregated men's and women's showers were located, while the open air portion was treated generally as a semi-indoor gymnasium.

2.9 Playgrounds

Twelve years before the Parks Department opened the city's first municipal playground in 1903, private charities had been taking over vacant lots and city-owned land and erecting playground equipment with accompanied hired playground organizers and monitors. These groups advocated strongly with the Parks Department to implement playgrounds in the public parks, but also tried to encourage the department take on the responsibility and care of those playground parks begun by the charities. In less than twenty years, playground advocates were able to achieve widespread influence in the New York City parks, since by 1908, playgrounds had been installed in most every park in the city, while New York had became headquarters for the Playground Association of America (the first president of the Association was former New York City police chief, New York State governor and recently retired U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt).[29]

The *New York Society for Parks and Playgrounds* created the city's first playground in January 1891, on a privately owned lot located on Second Avenue between 91st and 92nd Streets.[30] Incorporated in November 1890, by Charles Stover, DeWitt Seligman, William Rhinelander Stewart and Abram Hewitt (Hewitt was their first president); the Society's stated

[29] Everett Mero, "History of Playgrounds in America," *American Playgrounds,* 1908, 240.
[30] Walter Vroonan, "Parks and Playgrounds," *Century Magazine*, 43, December 1891, 317.

goal was to help "counteract the physical and moral degeneration which follows the crowding together of people in great cities."[31] By 1910, Stover would be appointed the commissioner of the Parks Department, and Hewitt, who proposed the Small Parks Act, would continue to agitate for small parks and playgrounds until his death in 1903, nine months, almost to the day, before the opening of the first municipal playground in New York City, in Seward Park.

The second significant playground organization, incorporated in 1897, was the Outdoor Recreation League (ORL), chaired by Charles Stover. Two important playground parks would open under the ORL, and both were on property that the city had condemned and purchased, but had run out of funds to improve as small parks. The first park opened by the ORL, in August 1898, was Hudson Bank Gymnasium and Playground; it was located on the future site of DeWitt Clinton Park. It was open free to the public both days and evenings. The ORL set up Hudson Bank to demonstrate the public demand for gymnastic equipment. An 1898 article in the New York Times described the equipment in the park as "equipped as well as the best gymnasium":

> The apparatus includes parallel bars, vaulting horse, teeter ladder, horizontal and vaulting bars, chest bars, inclined poles, ladder, bridge ladder, climbing poles and rings, vaulting buck, and punching bag. A seven-lap cinder track for athletic events is another feature.[32]

The second park opened in June 1899 by the ORL was on the city-owned future site of William H. Seward Park. Once the city's version of the Park opened in 1903, it was widely heralded as the first municipal playground in the country, but the ORL had already helped the neighborhood acclimate to a playground and recreational park at that location. [Figure 2.9] When the city improved the lot for the new park, the Parks Department took over the equipment and the running of the recreational programs. Because Charles Stover and the ORL had been trying for

[31] Vroonan, 317.

[32] "First open Air Gymnasium: the Outdoor Recreation League Opens Grounds at 53rd Street and 11th Avenue, *New York Times*, August 28, 1898.

years to persuade the Parks Department to design a recreational or playground park, they were delighted with this latest development. Many of the articles and reviews written about the park were equally positive and somewhat dismissive of those who wanted to cling to the old notion of a traditional nature park; even *Architectural Record* published an expose on the new park and its bathhouse in its March 1905 issue.[33] Most of the other small parks that had been opened before this year were retrofitted with playground equipment in 1903.

In her 1904 article on "City Playgrounds", Bertha Smith wrote that:

> Seward Park is the best example of the new idea. It is only by looking hard that one finds the narrow border of grass, which justifies the name of the park. The rest is playground, to the horror and disgust, it may be added, of many worthy persons who know child nature about as well as if they had sprung full-grown from a childless world … What a pity,' say these well-meaning theorists, 'to mar such a spot with unsightly swings and poles and ropes and iron bars, when these children of the poor might learn something of the beautiful of God's trees and flowers and grass were planted here!'

Ms. Smith described the other small parks that had opened without playgrounds:

> These small parks are for grown-ups. Children do not gather there to play on cement walks, sit on benches or look at trees and fenced off grass spiked with the eleventh commandment: "stay off the grass." They prefer the street, hence the need of park playgrounds[34]

History professor Steven Reiss wrote in his book, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports,* that "residents of the slums generally supported … reformers goal of building small parks and playgrounds for physical and moral uplift, although they might not have agreed with their other reasons that seemed like social control."[35]

Once implemented, the playgrounds led to recreational programs, instruction and

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[33] "Seward Park is Opened; Mayor Low Speaks to Vast Crowd Gathered in the Rain; Thousands of Children Sweep Away Policemen and Establish Themselves According to Their Inclination," *New York Times*, October 18, 1903; Edith Davids, "The Kindergarten of the Streets," *Everybody's Magazine*, 1903, 66; Berthe Smith, "City Playgrounds," *Munsey's Magazine*, May 1904, 287-294; and, Russell Sturgis, "Pavilions in the New York Parks," *Architectural Record* 17, March 1905, 258-254.

[34] Berthe Smith, "City Playgrounds," *Munsey's Magazine*, May 1904, 288.

[35] Reiss, Steven A., *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports,* Urbana: Illini Books, University of Illinois, 1991, 135.

oversight. Professional play leaders supervised the children's park activities and appointed responsible children among them as park leaders.[36] By 1904, children were competing in inter-small park athletics. The inter-park competitions were very successful, as the children competed on behalf of their neighborhoods, and those who won came home with prize ribbons.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the general population shifting its perception of public parks; they were starting to consider parks as places of recreation rather than places to socialize, promenade, read and relax. Though the playground was a natural extension the progressive reform ideal of offering democratic access to health, light, and air to all in the manner of public parks, landscape architects did not have the training or experience to combine these two function and some were just repulsed by the notion of a playground being inserted into a park. They felt playgrounds and parks were completely different concepts, with different functions and design needs. Since reformers lauded the parks, and not the streets, as the safest place for children to play, the seemingly natural extension, in their view, was for the Parks Department to design and install play equipment into the city's new, or old, public parks.

Within three years after most of the city's small parks had either opened with playgrounds and outdoor gymnasiums, or been retrofitted with them, playground attendants and programs of organized play were implemented into the parks. Their existence in the parks was dual purposed: they served as arbiters of order and peace while teaching the children of the poor to be good citizens in play. They taught the children American games and American sportsmanship and awarded them prizes for excellent performances. Inter-park competitions were held frequently, and news articles often mentioned the ethnicity of the children from different parks. To be allowed to participate in the recreation activities offered in the parks,

[36] Galen Cranz, "Changing Roles," *Landscape*, 22:3, Summer 1976, 13.

children had to behave in the manner that the playground attendant expected them to or they risked be banned from the park temporarily or permanently. In addition, emphasis in playground play was on defaulting to the group, and doing what was best for the group at all times.

In some of the parks, such as Hamilton Fish Park, mini-governments were created in which the children ran campaigns and voted for officers of the parks.[37] On a multitude of levels, the small parks and their programs served as powerful instructors in competition, cooperation, government and civic responsibility.

2.8 Farm School

Many of the late 19th century New York City charities ran settlement houses and other functions in an effort to help the city's most needy help themselves, but also to have a somewhat patronizing hand in shaping the kind of American citizens they would become. One such effort was the Farm Garden School begun in 1902 on the property that was to become DeWitt Clinton Park in 1905. Mrs. Henry Parsons (no relation of Parks Department's Landscape Architect Samuel Parsons) use the city's unimproved lot, with their blessing, to teach neighborhood children how to grow their own food. Her program was immediately successful and from its inception, there was a long waitlist of children eager to enroll. [Figure 2.80, 2.81] Each child was allocated gardening tools, seeds, and a four-foot by eight-foot lot on which to toil. Once Samuel Parsons began the design of DeWitt Clinton Park, Mrs. Parsons asked to have her program become part of the new park's plan. To his credit, Parsons complied with her request.

[37] "Inauguration of the Mayor of Hamilton Fish Park," *New York Daily Tribune*, September 3, 1906.


[Figure 2.80, 2.81] Fannie Parsons, "The First Children's Farm School," *The Outlook*, 74, May 1903, 71.

Henry Parsons, the director's son, described his mother's program as a laboratory in which children learned about "wealth, health, courage, energy and happiness."[38] He wrote that her objective was to help shape young people's minds at an early age:

> To teach the general public how to be happy, healthy and successful, educators must give definite instruction in how to attain these. The instruction must begin before twelve years of age, and must be so vividly imparted as to leave indelible impressions. It is almost impossible for the adult to change the habits of a lifetime, and learn anew, but with the child, its work and play can be so planned that it will unconsciously absorb the principles and form habits of action that will lead to the acquisition of health and happiness, thorough and profitable work, economy and thrift.[39]

Through gardening, the neighborhood children farmers learned that hard work, combined with just enough sun and rain, careful cultivation of the plants and diligent protection from insects or invaders, resulted in an abundant crop that could be sold at a market, used to feed one's family, or offered up to help a hungry neighbor. The children also learned that fresh air and sun are not just good for the plants but for people too.

The farm school quickly developed a broad reputation, and was visited by dignitaries from other states and countries; it became so popular that eventually satellite farm gardening schools opened in some of the other small parks, in which small plots were offered to children

[38] Henry G. Parsons *Children's Gardens for Pleasure, Health and Education,* NY: Sturgis & Walton Co., 1910, 3.

[39] Henry Griscom Parsons, *Children's Gardens for Pleasure, Health and Education,* New York: Sturgis & Walton Company, 1910, 1-2.

for gardening in their respective neighborhoods.

During World War I, the Federal Government caught onto the idea of children farming in local parks, and the government effectively took over all of the city's farming programs in a nation wide federally funded program intended to encourage the children to be frugal and resourceful. When the war ended, the program ended with it and was not reinstated within the city again. However, periodically, gardening programs are restarted in the city, but not in an organized program as Mrs. Parson's Farm School.

2.9 Concerts

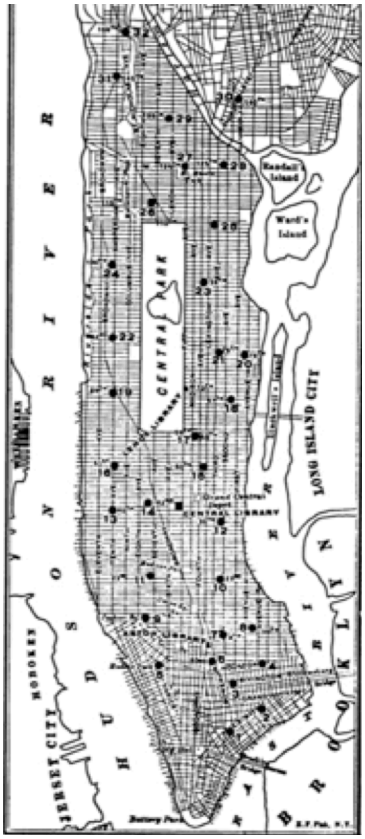
From the first park opening, the Parks Department arranged for weekly summer Classical music concerts in the small parks, just as they had already been doing for years in Central Park. Travelling orchestras were hired by the Parks Department and would play at most of the small parks. These concerts were very well attended in every park and tended to be offered on the same day every every week. University of Michigan Communications Professor Derek Vaillant wrote about what he called "musical progressivism" as the cultural politics of music and the mediation of culture by upper class white elites who assumed that recent immigrants in poor neighborhoods wanted to joing the "etherial realm of aristocratic manners."[40] Initially, the concerts held at William H. Seward Park, in a neighborhood consisting of primarily Eastern European Jews, were held on Friday nights, after sundown on the Sabbath. Eventually, the Seward Park concerts were re-scheduled to Saturday afternoons, where they stayed on the schedule for many years. Both timeframes ignored the sabbath rituals of those who lived in the Seward Park neighborhood. Even with that cultural insensitivity, the Seward Park concerts were also very well attended.

[40] Derek Vaillant, *Sounds of Reform: Progressivism & Music in Chicago, 1873-1935,* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

2.10 Libraries

The origins of the small parks coincided with the generous gift of Andrew Carnegie to cities all over the United States for the construction of public libraries. The Main branch of the New York Public Library, designed by Carrère and Hastings, was built between 1902 and 1911, and was created by combing the Carnegie gift with the library trusts of Samuel Tilden, James Lenox and John Jacob Astor. Because of the Carnegie gift, multiple auxilary neighborhood libraries were built during the same time as the Main branch; these neighborhood branches were built with similar goals to that of the small park: to make the libraries more accessible to those who did not have the means for transportation, and by providing libraries to neighborhoods, particularly poor neighborhoods, reformers hoped to influence future American citizens to seek knowledge and education. [Figure 2.10] Six of the small parks had libraries built on property that either abutted the park or was across the street from it. Two of the libraries had open air reading rooms on the top floor of the libraries, while all of the libraries were designed by prominent architects of the day:

1. Hamilton Fish Park Library: Carrère & Hastings, 1909, razed early 1930s to widen Houston Street.
2. Hudson Park Library: Carrère & Hastings, 1906
3. St. Gabriel's Park Library: McKim Mead & White, 1908, razed 1938 to build the Midtown Tunnel
4. Seward Park Library: Babb, Cook & Willard, 1909
5. Webster Library (1 block from John Jay Park):
6. Babb, Cook & Willard, 1906
7. Columbus Library (1.5 blocks from Mulberry Bend Park): Babb, Cook and Willard, 1909.



[Figure 2.10] Branches of the New York Public Library (Black dots), *Report of the Director*, New York Public Library, NY: 1908.

3.0 Small Park Typologies

The landscape and architectural designs of New York City's eight new small parks, born of the Small Parks Act, represent the competing theories of landscape architecture dominant in small park design in the 19th and early 20th century. From the picturesque park style made famous by Central Park to formal gardens promoted in the City Beautiful movement, to recreational parks where the focus is on play and athletics, almost all of these parks began with components of one or more of these programs. With the exception of two parks that were distinctly styled to emulate Beaux-Arts parks, these small parks' plans cannot be easily placed into a category in which they follow a set of determinants for one particular style. Instead, their plans suggest conflicted landscape architects who had not yet developed design responses to the growing demands of a public determined to have its say in park design, or who were simply resisting those demands for as long as they were able.

In her book, *The Politics of Park Design: the History of Urban Parks in America,* architectural professor and sociologist Galen Cranz wrote about what she defined as the four programs or forms of parks that have developed in the American park movement since the mid-nineteenth century: the "pleasure garden," the "reform park," the "recreational facility" and the "open-space system."[1] She argued that each of these four park programs were produced though an effort to solve problems emerging from the effects of urbanization and industrialization, and each program is, in effect, was an attempt at social control.[2] Though each of the city's eight small parks in their original forms, fall squarely into Cranz's category of "reform park," they each have influences from one or more sub-categories of either the picturesque park, the Beaux-

[1] Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: the History of Urban Parks in America,* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989.

[2] Galen Cranz, "Changing Roles of Urban Parks: From Pleasure Garden to Open Space," *Landscape*, 22:3, Summer 1976, 9.

Arts park or the playground park.

3.1 Pre-Small Parks: Pleasure Gardens and the Urban Park Movement

The landscape architecture of Central Park is important to the small parks movement because prior to the new small municipal planned parks, Central Park's design elements were the ones most familiar to the residents of New York City. But Central Park, and great urban parks of its type and era were not the first urban parks in America. During the hundred years or so, before the advent of the pleasure garden, there were town greens, squares and rolling bucolic cemeteries planted with large shade trees and used by families for gatherings and picnics. When the new small parks opened, and parks departments' landscape architects experimented with different types of park programs, they had to deal with a public who wanted its collective voice to be heard and weighed into decision-making involving the parks' functions or design. Some wanted small models of the pleasure garden that they had grown used to. Cranz definition of Central Park as a pleasure garden is one coined by its creators; the notion of pleasure suggested that the park was a place where city residents could escape their drudgery of long work hours, and with it, the growing pollution and illness that permeated the city with its increasing population and industrialization. The park opened in 1859, in great part because the Common Council wanted to set aside a large open public green space, into which free democratic access would be available to all.

Throughout the first two thirds of the 19th century, cholera and yellow fever epidemics killed thousands of New York City residents; most, but not all, of those deaths occurred in the poorer, more densely populated districts below 14th Street.[3] The upheaval to the city from these

[3] Yellow fever epidemics: 1805 (50,000 fled), 1819 & 1822. Cholera epidemics: 1832: 3500 dead in a month, 80,000 fled; 1848-49: 5071 dead in 7 months; 1854: 2509 dead & 1866: "only" 1137 dead. Tuberculosis killed greater numbers, but not as quickly or violently: 1821:14,900; 1830: 16,400; 1844: 11,800; 1855: 15,100, 1860:

epidemics was tremendous as they caused thousands of frightened residents to flee the city. Since far more died in the city's poorest neighborhoods than elsewhere in the city, many in 19th century New York, who still thought that the diseases were spread via miasmas, focused on what to do with the problem of the poor and their housing. Not unlike the goals associated with the construction of the small parks, an important goal in the creation of Central Park was to offer a healthy escape, from the poorest and most polluted neighborhoods, while minimizing the effects of disease on the city's trade and industry.

Unlike with the small parks, the large pleasure garden, as Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux created it, was an enormous project requiring the manipulation of land, trees, boulders, water, meadows and hilly terrain to create a bucolic illusion of picturesque landscape. To walk through this park with its constantly changing vistas, its curved circulation paths (as opposed to the grid of the city), one was ever surprised by what new scenes of park beauty unfolded before one's eyes. Each scene resembled what might be a landscape painting, or an ideal of landscape beauty. This kind of experience in a park is particularly challenging to re-create in a city block than it is in the 840-acres of Central Park.[4]

Olmsted and Vaux were influenced by the English picturesque estate landscapes of Lancelot Capability Brown and Henry Repton. [Figure 3.10, 3.14] Brown's plans involved moving land around to create lakes and hills, installing boulders, bridges, clumps of trees and large undulating meadows. [Figure 3.11] Serpentine paths would meander strategically around these installations, thereby directing one's eyes to a constantly changing view while finally

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9,100 & 1865: 9,500. Thomas M. Daniel, *Pioneers of Medicine & Their Impact on Tuberculosis*, Rochester: Univ. of Rochester, 2000, 159. The Sanatoria movement, begun about 1880, lacking knowledge yet of bacteria, promoted "open air cures," difficult for poor who lacked access to parks, porches or sanatoriums. "Tuberculosis in Europe & N. America 1800-1922," *Contagion: Historical Views of Diseases & Epidemics*, Harvard.edu, viewed 12.03.2012.

[4] Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America 1820-1920,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978, 1992, 236.

witnessing the approach to the estate's home. Once at the house, one could see an expanse of naturalistic landscape, with woodlands, lakes, bridges and meadows.[5]

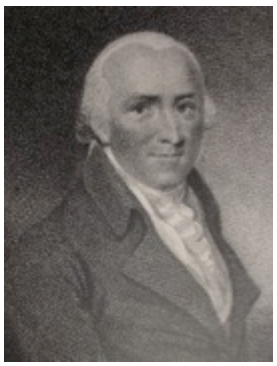
Lancelot Capability Brown
By N. D. Holland, 1769
[Figure 3.10]

Blenheim Castle
Grand Bridge & Lake
Wikimedia Commons [Figure 3.11]

Repton's landscapes too, offered a complete reinvention of the land. He produced his "Red Books" for clients in which he created before and after images for his proposed projects. [Figure 3.12] Repton's principal work was for clients with large estates that had already been landscaped, so most of his work came from focusing on transitions within the landscape, most frequently from the house to a terrace, and then to the picturesque landscape beyond. Though Olmsted and Vaux did not use traditional or exotic flowers in their parks as Repton did, they did employ the concept of transitions. Throughout Central Park are areas designed to evoke the wild, or "the sublime" represented by untamed woods and steep outcroppings of schist; to create transition from sublime to picturesque, Olmsted and Vaux used man-made lakes and pathways directing the park user within view, but turning him to a meadow or terrace. In this way, they created public and non-public spaces within the park.

[5] Capability Brown's landscape at Blenheim Castle contributed to its World Heritage status. He created, "…glorious views both to and from the house, the finest of which is the majestic panorama observed on entering the Park through Hawksmoor's Triumphal arch at Woodstock, the shimmering expanse of the lake, the grand bridge and the dense canopy of trees on the rising ground beyond. Brown created here a landscape that appealed to all the senses. The paths are laid out and the trees planted so that the visitor is constantly surprised by a new vista unfolding as they walk." Source: 'Capability' Brown's landscaped Park, www.blenheimpalace.com, as viewed 12.05.2012.


Repton's *Red Book*: Wentworth, S. Yorkshire, before/after Repton's proposed plan
[Figure 3.12] Courtesy of the Morgan Library



Humphry Repton
[Figure 3.13]

Because Central Park is such an enormous park, the manipulation of topography, the variations of plantings and trees throughout the park offer a wide range of scenery and landscape. The small parks, however, were typically a city block in size. To try to re-create in the small parks, the picturesque effect so masterfully created in Central Park, was a task next to impossible. When Vaux designed two of the small parks, he used elements of the picturesque, but he could not have created the same effect on such a small parcel.as he and Olmsted had done in Central Park. Landscape architects had very small canvases on which to create these parks. Typically, their plans encompassed a city block or two. With the exception of Mulberry Bend Park, the park sites were roughly rectangular in shape, and so too, were the buildings designed to sit upon them, albeit, in locations frequently sited close to the parks' perimeters allowing the parks' primary functions to take place in the parks' centers.

3.2 Reform Park: Picturesque

As the Parks Department's landscape architect, Vaux planned the first few parks; sadly, he died before his parks were constructed.[6] Had he designed the parks in 1887, when the Small Parks Act was passed, he might have had better success with the picturesque style of landscape

[6] Calvert Vaux died in 1895. Mulberry Bend Park opened in 1897, and East River Park (now Carl Schurz Park) opened in 190

design. But, because the parks were not constructed for at least another ten years, the public's perception of parks was shifting toward the notion of playing or athletics in the park. Both of his parks would be given playgrounds within a few years of opening. Initially, Vaux attempted to re-create mini-pleasure grounds on city blocks. He employed meandering paths, and changes in elevation to try to evoke shifting vistas within his parks. In Mulberry Bend Park (now Columbus Park), this was quite difficult to achieve. Both the space and the budget were much smaller than that of Central Park, and though he also planned trees along his meandering paths, they were very small and planted alongside walkways, park benches, fences, lawn and an open-air building. Little to no other vegetation was planted in Mulberry Bend Park landscape. East River Park (now Carl Schurz Park) came much closer to the picturesque ideal that Vaux designed. His paths meandered through natural elevations in the land and dramatic outcroppings of schist. Trees were planted throughout, and best of all, the park opened to the stunning vista of Hell's Gate, (the junction of the Long Island Sound, the Harlem River and the East River) and beyond that, Long Island, Blackwell's Island and the Great Barn Island. [Figure 3.20] It was, and remains, a dramatically beautiful landscape.

[Figure 3.20] William Bridges, "Hell Gate," *Map, City of New York, 1811*. Library of Congress

Vaux designed key elements of the picturesque in his plans. His version was more of a deconstructed picturesque. He used curvilinear pathways, rounded corners, spaces of lawn and rounded undulating planting beds along the park's perimeter, and shifts in the elevation when possible.

In his 1900 discussion of Hudson Park, the second small park to open, architectural critic

Montgomery Schuyler noted the challenges in recreating the picturesque style in a small venue:

> …the purpose is to give the illusion of rural scenery and the physical and moral benefits that come from it, especially the sense of repose that it brings … In a small park it is impossible to give this illusion without surrendering the whole space to an irregular, picturesque romantic treatment, with all the space that can be had for grass and trees … The art is to conceal the art. Such picturesqueness as can be attained shall seem to have come about of itself, and be attained by judicious planting and judicious letting alone, with such structures as may be practically required as inconspicuous as may be.[7]

Given the space needed for transitions within the landscape, and vistas within and without the landscape, as well as the need for the park patrons to be able to feel as though they have escaped the city, the picturesque seemed better suited to large parks than to the sizes of these small parks.

3.3. Reform Park: Beaux-Arts

Two of the small parks were designed in their entirety, both landscape and architecture, by two American graduates of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris: John Carrère and Thomas Hastings. Their plans emulated the lofty purpose of the City Beautiful movement, originated in the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893), in that their structures were monumentally formal and plans were rectilinear and pristine with fountains, parterres, reflecting ponds and exedras. The City Beautiful movement was a reform philosophy, popular in the 1890s and early 1900s, that incorporated urban planning with grand, monumental architecture "beautifications" of public structures in city life. It combined Beaux-Arts axial plans with monumental classical structures built on raised plinths, not unlike temples in Rome or Athens. The goal of the City Beautiful movement in re-forming town centers, building libraries, courthouses and administration buildings as temples was to elevate the buildings' purposes with their architecture

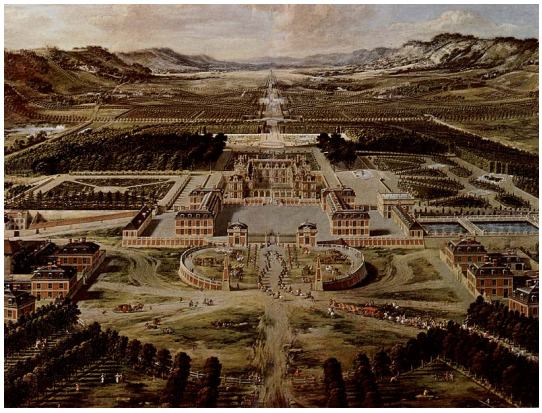
[7] Montgomery Schuyler, "Formal Gardens and Small Parks," *Scribner's Magazine*, 27, June 1900, 638. Mr. Schuyler, 1843-1914, was a co-founder of *Architectural Record* in 1891, was a member of the AIA, an editorial writer for the *New York Times* for 24 years, as well as a managing editor for *Harper's Weekly.*

and to ennoble all who passed through their doors. In the same way, these Beaux-Arts parks, though built in slum tenement wards, and surrounded by the city's poorest residents, were meant to ennoble the poor residents who lived and worked near them, and to motivate them to want to be their best in their own lives and to become better Americans.

The City Beautiful movement, led by Beaux-Arts trained architects, motivated city administrators to coordinate architects, planners and landscape architects to work together to beautify the parts of their cities where the municipal government could exercise control of its image. Though these small parks were an example, the method, when applied to the design and construction of a grand library, such as the one Carrère and Hastings designed for Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, would work much better than trying to implement these ideals in a park where neighborhood children would run and play no matter what the architect had in mind.

The Beaux-Arts parks' plans were influenced by French landscape designer André Le Nôtre, the designer of the Gardens of Versailles. [Figure 3.30] Le Nôtre re-designed the gardens surrounding the King's Château de Versailles, where he laid out the radiating plan of more than 15,000 acres. [Figure 3.31] Where he encountered swampland, he designed the supreme example of a French 17th-century, high Baroque style garden. [Figure 3.32] Common in this design typology is a centrally positioned building. Relying on Cartesian graphing, Le Nôtre's plan radiates avenues from that building, on various axes leading to surrounding sub-landscapes. This technique gave the visual impression that the master owned the land as far as the eye could see. Embedded in the design would be parterres, fountains, basins and canals, cascades, plantings, trees, shrubs and flowers. All of these components were highly manicured and required perpetual maintenance. This type of garden typically signaled power and required an audience to admire it and swoon over the power of its owner and his ability to remake and control the land.

André Le Nôtre, 1680
Carlo Maratta, artist
Palace of Versailles
[Figure 3.30]

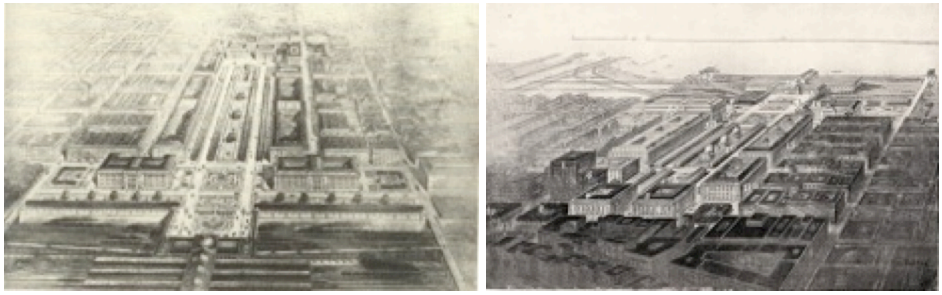


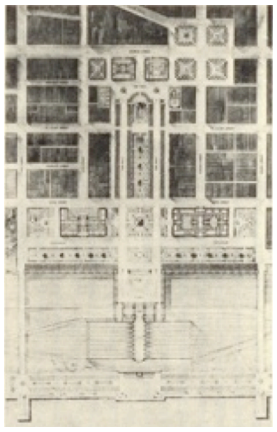
The Palace of Versailles, 1668
Pierre Patel, artist
[Figure 3.31]

Plan View, Gardens of Versailles
1660, André Le Nôtre
[Figure 3.32]

By focusing on the same characteristics of classical architecture, symmetry, picturesque views, axial plans and monumental scale, several cities in the United States implemented these ideas. In the late 1890s and early 20th century, monumental marble buildings popped up seemingly everywhere, and several cities hired architects to re-design their cities, at least in plan. One such plan was Daniel Burnham's 1909 plan for Chicago. In Cleveland, Daniel Burnham, A.W. Brunner and J.M. Carrère worked together to design "the Group Plan" of the city, some of which was implemented. [Figure 3.33] Brunner too, worked in this style to design the pavilion in the new William H. Seward Park (1903).

In his disdainful analysis of Carrère and Hastings' Hudson Park, Schuyler considered the park's stone belvedere, fountains spraying from lions' mouths, stone





[Figure 3.33] The Group Plan, Cleveland, 1903
A.W. Brunner, D. Burnham and J. M. Carrère

columns and high iron fence that surrounded the park, reflecting pool, and slopes leading to it upon which grass was reluctant to grow, a "pompous architectural composition" of elements that were wasted for any other purpose than "promoting the expression of pretentiousness and formality."[8] Hudson Park, according to Schuyler, called into question just what a "breathing space" ought to be, and whether the formal garden is a more eligible ideal for a two-acre city park." "Here," he wrote, "the visitor is expected to derive his satisfaction from the perception that the place is as 'regularly laid out' as the streets, more regularly laid out, indeed, than the streets in this region … where formality is substituted for free growth and art for nature."[9] Schuyler's response to this Beaux-Arts park was not unlike many others in New York City. At the end of his 1900 critique, he joined many New York City parents and children in calling for the "people's playgrounds." [Figure 3.34]

[Figure 3.34] "Hudson Park" in Montgomery Schuyler, "Formal Gardens and Small Parks," *Scribner's Magazine*, 27, June 1900, 637, 639; Schuyler called this park a "pompous architectural composition" of elements that were wasted for any other purpose than "promoting the expression of pretentiousness and formality."

[8] Montgomery Schuyler, "Formal Gardens and Small Parks," *Scribner's Magazine*, 27, June 1900, 639.
[9] Ibid, 640.

3.4 Reform Park: Recreation

The last small park typology of the new small parks was the recreation park. With this typology, there was no precedent upon which the landscape architect could base his plan, nor any direction for him to turn for how to combine his own education and experience in landscape architecture with the growing demand of progressive reformers to create small parks in which playgrounds and athletic programs are the park's primary function. As stated before, the landscape architect was trained to think of parks in terms of nature, with trees, rocks, lawns, flowers (or not), shifting topography, water treatments; all of these are elements found in nature. Inserted into a typical park might be walking paths, planting beds, benches or other elements that were meant to assist the human in enjoying the nature program within the park. To design such a park and then, be required to insert into it elements, which when used, will likely be destructive to the nature elements of the park, created a real challenge for landscape architects in the early 20th century.

Samuel Parsons, Jr., the Parks Department's Landscape Architect in 1898, was trained in, and preferred, the picturesque style of landscape architecture. Though he did not happily concede to reformers' demands of a recreational park design, he eventually designed playgrounds into all of the new small parks. Since the combination of the two functions was a new concept in landscape design, Parsons tried different methods of design and arrangement to accomplish this. In his first combination park, the bathhouse was sited in the park but along the perimeter, while the recreation area consumes the park's center, while the planting plan still retains Parsons' preferred curvilinear paths and undulating planting beds reminiscent of the earlier romantic parks. Because the children who played in the park frequently trampled all the plantings, Parsons' planting beds were soon fenced in.

Two of Parsons' parks were almost completely given over to playgrounds and outdoor gymnastic equipment, with minimal plantings located only on the park's perimeter. Narrow undulating planting beds, with trees planted in the beds, were completely encircled by fences. Parsons' fourth park was probably his favorite. Sited on a lot overlooking the North (Hudson) River, its view enhanced the park's farm garden, curvilinear walking paths, playground and outdoor gymnasiums and two large temple-like pavilions. Parsons appears to have been trying to please the multiple reforming forces that pushed for their own agendas within this park; because the park had so many programs within its plan, the final effect was an eclectic uncoordinated combination of the elements within.

Later landscape architects and park designers, if they had the opportunity that Parsons did not, would develop different ways of creatively coordinating the many functions within a park, but the best of them would isolate the functions (pure playground, pure nature, pure recreational facility, etc.) and not try to fit so many elements into one park. Because Parsons worked at the Parks Department at a highly transitional time in park design, he struggled to combine multiple elements and programs into his parks.

3.5 Robert Moses: Economies of Scale

Robert Moses' tenure as New York City's Parks Commissioner, from 1934 to 1960, oversaw the effective conversion of the small parks individualized playgrounds and bathhouses to parks containing standardized facilities and buildings; Cranz refers to this phase as the recreational facility phase in park design. Though Moses and his Parks employees started their work on the small parks some thirty years after their inception, their work directly impacted the small parks. By the time Moses was appointed Commissioner of the Parks Department, the country was in the middle of the Great Depression. Moses had to work with a limited budget

and parks with considerable deterioration. Moses solution was to achieve economies of scale by replacing worn out and decaying buildings with cost effective utilitarian concrete or brick structures that lacked the ennobling characteristics of the buildings they replaced. Instead of repairing stone paths and walkways, the Parks Department used asphalt liberally to pave in the parks. Standardized iron bars and play equipment were installed throughout the parks system, thereby minimizing the uniqueness of each park, but increasing the Parks Department's economic efficiency.

Using Works Progress Administration funds, Moses oversaw the building of several swimming pools in the city's parks during the 1930s; some of them were sited in the city's small parks. Of the eight parks in this thesis, Hamilton Fish, John Jay and Hudson Park would see the addition of swimming pools. In addition, wading pools, shallow watered pools typically intended for younger children, were constructed in Dewitt Clinton, Mulberry Bend/Columbus, St. Gabriel's, East River/Carl Schurz and William H. Seward Parks. With the addition of the pools to their parks, the Parks Department offered swimming lessons to neighborhood children.

It was during this period of focus on cost effectiveness and economies of scale, that some of the small parks' important buildings were razed. It was also during this period that Moses oversaw the installation of roads, highways, tunnels and bridges down the east and west borders of Manhattan. In order to attain this goal, he removed or extended large parcels of land from or to three of the small parks. In order to construct the elevated Miller Highway in 1936, approximately one third of DeWitt Clinton Park was removed from its western border; that project shrunk the park, removed its original buildings, and blocked completely its beautiful view of the river. At East River Park (re-named Carl Schurz Park in 1911), the park was extended in a cantilever over the 1934 East River Drive (Franklin Delano Roosevelt Drive)

Because the very nature of landscape changes over time, because of growth, blight, drought, storms, absence of maintenance or incorrect maintenance, plant and tree life can change overnight. Parks, small or large, need constant upkeep to have their plans preserved. The budget restrictions of the Great Depression, coupled with perhaps a disregard for the work of architects and landscape architects of earlier generations, worked together to allows the small parks' deterioration. During his tenure, Moses brought into the Parks Department new architects, engineers and landscape architects that would soon establish their own lofty reputations in the design world. Because these designers re-designed aspects of the small parks, their work has become part of the important history of the small parks designs.

Moses' influence on the small parks would shift the parks further from design programs of landscape and closer to programs of pure athletics. Many of these parks were given basketball, racquetball, handball and tennis courts during his tenure. Also added in some of the parks were baseball fields and soccer fields. Most of the small parks retained at least a small playground, but in contrast to the early playground parks, Moses' design teams relegated the playground to a minor element in the parks. It is important to note here that he did not impose upon New Yorkers his own values in the parks design; instead, the changes made in these parks by the Parks Department reflected the values of a city that wanted to exercise in its parks. Moses' overall focus in the small parks was on cost efficiency, standardized equipment and athletics. In the small parks' spaces not already occupied with athletic programs, Parks Department landscape architects have, over the years, updated landscape and planting plans as needed.

4.0 Designers of the Small Parks

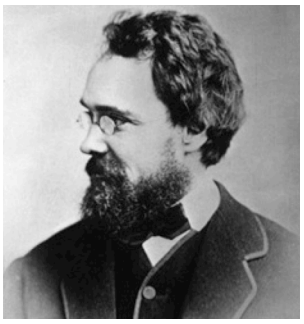
The principal landscape designers of the eight small parks, in their original form were Calvert Vaux, John Carrère, Thomas Hastings and Samuel Parsons, Jr; their biographies are listed first in this chapter. Of these four, Vaux and Parsons were the Parks Department's landscape architects when the parks were designed. Carrère and Hastings were hired to design both landscapes and structures of two small parks. Vaux, Parsons and Carrère and Hastings' three sets of parks represent the competing theories in small park design in late 19th/early 20th century America: Vaux's parks were picturesque, Carrère and Hastings' parks were Beaux-Arts, while Parsons' parks attempted to combine picturesque with play.

Those who designed the small parks' bathhouses and recreational buildings were well known architects of their day. Hired by the Parks Department without proposals or competitions, their selection process is not recorded or explained in the Parks Department files. Only in the commissioners' *Minutes* are there notations that parks plans were being prepared by certain architects. The original small parks structures were designed by John Howard and Samuel Cauldwell (Mulberry Bend Park), John Carrère and Thomas Hastings (Hudson and Hamilton Fish Parks), John Barney and Henry Chapman (DeWitt Clinton Park), Arnold Brunner (William H. Seward Park), Gustave Steinacher (St. Gabriel's Park and East River Park/Carl Schurz Park) and Jaroslav Klaus (John Jay Park); their biographies are listed second in this chapter.

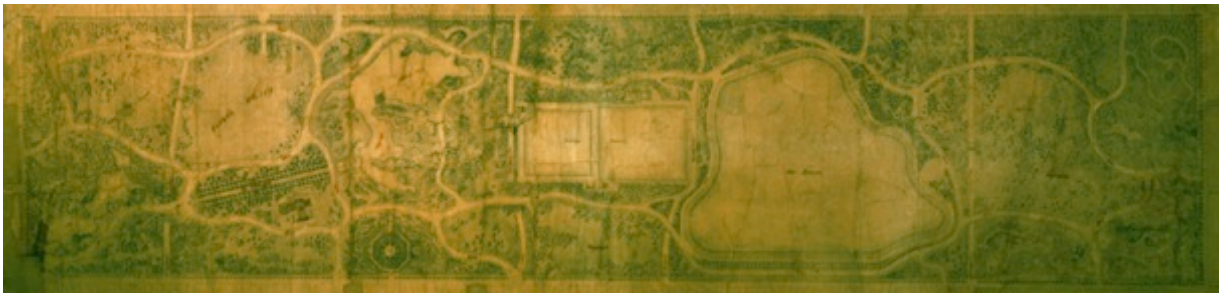
In the 1930s, under Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, small park landscapes were altered while buildings were razed, with new structures taking their place. Aymar Embury II and Gilmore Clarke were the Parks Department's chief small parks architect and landscape architect under Moses, but there were many other designers involved in the small parks' preservation, rehabilitations, renovations, or re-designs. Their biographies map up this chapters third section.

4.1 Landscape

Calvert Bowyer Vaux


Calvert Vaux
[Figure 4.10]

Calvert Vaux (1824-1895) is best known for co-designing Central Park with Frederick Law Olmsted. [Figure 4.10] Born and educated in England, Vaux was a methodical, precise architect and draftsman with experience in landscape design when in 1857 Olmsted was appointed Superintendent of Central Park; by then, Vaux had already been living in New York for seven years.[1] Their Greensward Plan submission for the city's new Central Park won the competition and started their life long connection, especially for Vaux, with New York City's Parks Department. [Figure 4.11] The plan was consistent with what would be Vaux's landscape design aesthetic throughout his career. In 1865, they formed a partnership, and together they designed Brooklyn's Prospect Park, Fort Greene Park, Tompkins Park, Buffalo's parks and parkways, and the Riverside suburb outside Chicago, among other projects.


[Figure 4.11] Olmsted & Vaux's original Greensward Plan from 1858.
Department of Parks, New York City. http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/olmsted-parks

After being recruited in London by American landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing into his expanding business, the "Bureau of Architecture, Vaux moved to Newburgh,

[1] Elizabeth Blackmar and Roy Rosenzweig, *The Park and the People*, Ithaca: Cornell University, 1992, 128. Olmsted was unqualified for the Superintendent's position. When the Parks Commissioners regarded Olmsted throughout the building project as "Architect in Chief," Vaux was considered Olmsted's hourly assistant.

New York, in 1850."[2] [Figure 4.12] Soon, Downing hired another British architect, Frederick Withers, to help the firm keep up with its growing business. Downing's 1851 editorial in his magazine, *The Horticulturalist*, lamented New York City's lack of a public park, "breathing place" or "grounds for exercise."[3] Downing wrote an important persuasive editorial to call for the creation of large urban park, suggesting it might become "the lungs" of the city, but his 1852 drowning death, while trying to save victims of the *Henry Clay* steamboat accident, prevented him from being a part of the city's new urban park's design.[4]

With Downing, Vaux expanded his work to include civic architecture as well as the design of private homes. Together, they designed both the White House and Smithsonian Institution's grounds; later, Vaux suggested in his 1856 *Horticulturalist* article that the American Government should recognize and support the Arts.[5]

Vaux's interest in civic projects was not limited to parks. In the 1870s, with Frederick Withers, Vaux designed the Jefferson Market Courthouse, and with Jacob Wrey Mould, he designed the Museum of Natural History and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. [Figure 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14] While designing public architecture and landscapes, Vaux continued to design residential architecture, but he expanded that part of his practice to include row houses, factories and boarding houses.

Though Vaux's architectural style was Victorian, with highly detailed polychrome brick façades, complete with turrets and spires, his landscape plans were picturesque or naturalistic. In

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[2] William Alex, *Calvert Vaux: Architect and Planner,* New York: Ink, Inc., 1994, 3.

[3] Andrew J. Downing, "The People's Park at Birkenhead, Near Liverpool," *The Horticulturist and Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste,* 6:5, May 1851, 228.

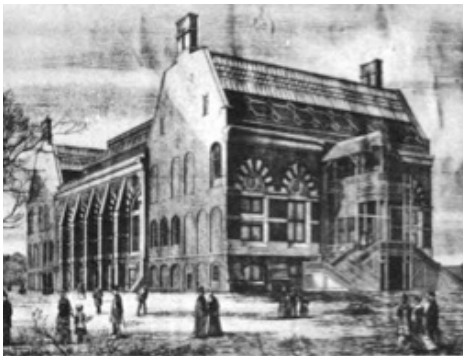
[4] John C. Proctor, "The Tragic Death of Andrew Jackson Downing and the Monument to his Memory," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, *Washington, D.C.,* 27, 1925, 254; Andrew J. Downing, "Review: William Ware's Sketches of European Capitals," *The Horticulturist & Journal of Rural Art & Rural Taste*, XI, November 1851, 520.

[5] Calvert Vaux, "Should a Republic Encourage the Arts?" *The Horticulturist & Journal of Rural Art & Rural Taste,* 7:2, February 1852, 73-77.

order to create Vaux's "natural" look, materials, rocks and elevations were manipulated, sometimes dramatically resulting in changing, but naturalistic vistas of landscape. In his small park plans, he maintained his ideal curvilinear paths, pointing pedestrians in their walks, towards whatever picturesque views might be captured or created on site. Vaux's landscape plans, unlike his architecture, generally avoided right angles.

[Figure 4.12]
Jefferson Market Courthouse
1873-77
NYC-architecture.com

[Figure 4.13]
American Museum of Natural History
Annual Report: Department of Parks, 1872-3, 10.



[Figure 4.14]
Metropolitan Museum 1874-80, W.E. Howe
History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art 1913.

Offered the role of the Park's Department's landscape architect in 1881, Vaux accepted the job on the condition that they hire Vaux and Company to cover the position. Vaux and Withers had maintained their private architectural practice since Downing's death; Vaux invited Samuel Parsons, Jr. to join their firm in 1880. With the Parks Department arrangement, Vaux was able to introduce Parsons to the Department and train him as a possible successor. Parsons proved a quick study in Landscape design and parks management. As the Parks Department's landscape architect, Vaux was often offended by Parks Commissioners' tactics within the Department and in the parks; he seemed to resign or be dismissed and rehired frequently through his Parks Department tenure. Vaux resigned as Superintending Architect in 1883, followed by Parsons appointment as Superintendent of Public Parks in 1885. Vaux was reappointed Landscape Architect in 1888, and held that position until his death, in 1895.

Carrère and Hastings



Thomas S. Hastings John Merven Carrère
Photos: New York Public Library
[Figure 4.15]

John Merven Carrère (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) were both American students at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris; because of their training there, they were natural candidates to design municipal architecture and landscapes during the "City Beautiful" movement.[6] [Figure 4.15] Their small park plans emulated the movement's lofty ideals, in which architects designed municipal city plans, buildings and landscapes with temple like structures and axial plans with parterres, fountains and other elements found in Le Nôtre's designs. These park designs contrasted directly to their surrounding tenements neighborhoods; Carrère and Hastings parks were temple oases designed with no attempt to blend into the neighborhood scale or streetscape. The architects' design intention was to influence those who used their parks to want to be better citizens.

Though Carrère and Hastings knew of each other in Paris, they had not generated a friendship, as they were students in different ateliers. Remarkably, after school, they both returned to New York to work for McKim, Mead and White.[7] In less than three years, the talented duo left their employers in 1885 to form their own partnership. They were very successful, very fast, and had an important and lasting effect on New York City's architecture. They had already won the 1897 design competition for the new city library when they received the commissions for two of the new small parks: Hudson and Hamilton Fish Parks.

Both men gave public lectures on the responsibility of architects and their architecture, to elevate their fellow man with ennobling structures and landscapes; their philosophy fit well with

[6] For more on Beaux-Arts parks and the City Beautiful movement, please see chapter 3, Reform Parks: Beaux Arts.
[7] Thomas Hastings, "In Memorium: John Merven Carrere, *The New York Architect*, V: 53, May 1911, 65.

the progressives ideals of other reformers at the time. In an 1884 *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* article, Hastings detailed his philosophy on styles of architecture and proposed the style he felt was most appropriate for their time. Referring to it as the "architecture of the Renaissance," he defined it as "any architecture designed since the revival of the arts, until this modern confusion, whether belonging to the period of Francis I, Henry IV, Louis XIV or the Empire."[8] In the same essay, he denounced other styles of architecture as unfit, labeling them inappropriate for the modern age. Gothic, he wrote, or "any other medieval style" cannot be utilized in architecture unless we "do away with the revival of learning and the Reformation."[9] Modern Romanesque's "rounded corners, stumpy columns and low arches" does not "constitute a style."[10] Only the architectural style of the Renaissance, because of its association with the rebirth of the ancient classical Greek and Roman capacity for reason, growth, democracy and betterment of society was acceptable to Hastings; and, both he and Carrère were convinced that France's "modern" Renaissance architecture was best suited to fit America's reform needs.[11]

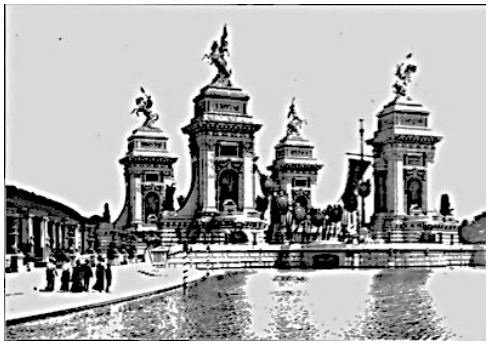
The January 1910 *Architectural Record* survey of Carrère and Hastings' work compares their work to that of their former employer, McKim, Mead and White. The latter, though relying on Renaissance architecture, was chiefly "early Italian, but this bias did not prevent them from designing … Roman, Palladian … or Georgian buildings."[12] Carrère & Hastings were "faithful in their allegiance to a certain phase of the French Renaissance."[13] Understanding America's need for a new "American" tradition required a style that "must be founded upon an antecedent European tradition, because acceptable architectural forms must be served up with a garniture of

[8] Thomas Hastings, "Relations of Life to Style in Architecture," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, May 1884, 957.
[9] Hastings, 961.
[10] Hastings, 961.
[11] Hastings, 962.
[12] "The Work of Carrère and Hastings," *Architectural Record,* Volume 27:10, January 1910, 4.
[13] "The Work," 4.

splendid associations and of unimpeachable authority."[14] According to the 1910 *Architectural Record,* Carrère and Hastings were the first prominent American architecture practice to be both Paris-Beaux-Arts-method trained and to consistently, successfully interject French Renaissance style into their work; both Hamilton Fish and Hudson Parks were good examples of this style.[15]

One year after the 1900 Hamilton Fish Park opening, while the New York Public Library was still under construction, Carrère & Hasting's work was prominently featured in Buffalo, New York's Pan American Exposition. Carrère was the Exposition's Chairman of the Board of Architects, and, in that capacity, designed the Exposition's plan, landscape, and the Exposition's Triumphal Bridge. [Figure 4.16, 4.17] The library, the plan and the bridge were grand, monumental and as such, expressed Carrère and Hasting's Beaux-Arts aesthetic.

[Figure 4.16] New York Public Library, 1908 During Construction. Photo: Library of Congress



[Figure 4.17] Entrance Pylons: Pan-American Exposition Buffalo, NY, 1901, "The Work of Carrère & Hastings *Architectural Record,* 27:1, January 1910, 67.

John Carrère's 1907 talk to Hartford's Municipal Art Society on beautifying cities promoted formal city planning. He stressed the need for planned "control" of cities' inhabitants with wide landscaped streets that served as both as breathing and transportation spaces, promotion of hygiene, through sanitation, drainage and ventilation, and perhaps most important, the use of art to uplift the population. His version of city planning resembled that of Baron Haussmann's with his recommendations of wide boulevards, parks and architecture, all of which

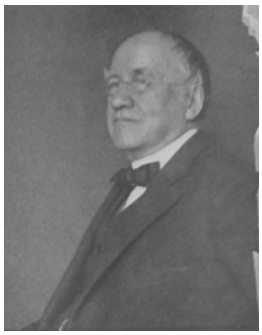
[14] "The Work," 39.

[15] "The Work," 112.

should be monumental or grand.[16] Carrère said that some had opposed his ideas of siting high-art parks in the middle of slums as "casting pearls before swine," because in order to appreciate fine art, one must also have the "cultivation and education that come with riches."[17] Architect George Pentecost wrote in 1903 that a "park should be a work of art; it should be valued in the proportion that it attains that end over and above utilitarian ends… art in the same sense that our modern public libraries are art" with an "educational influence upon the public mind."[18]

In rejecting the naturalistic, or picturesque style of landscape design, Hastings said, more than twenty years after the opening of Hudson and Hamilton Fish Parks, that "a small park, bounded by straight lines in the heart of the city, with winding paths and irregular grades…is quite out of place; such a park should be architectural in character. It should be…a public square rather than a park."[19] Beaux-Arts parks were successfully implemented in Paris so he believed in the strength of their design to uplift the population.

Samuel Parsons, Jr.



Samuel Parsons, Jr.
Mabel Parsons, *Memories of Samuel Parsons,* NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1926, cover.
[Figure 4.18]

Samuel Bowne Parsons, Jr. (1844-1923) worked for the Parks Department in New York City for thirty years; in his last nine years there, not long after he was appointed Landscape Architect, reform groups demanded change in how the city's small parks were designed.[20] [Figure 4.18] Parsons would initially design four of the small parks; all four would have playgrounds and outdoor gymnasiums. Additionally, each park would have various amounts of foliage, lawn or planting beds. Parsons experimented

[16] Carrère, 7.
[17] Carrère, 17.
[18] George Pentecost, "City Gardens, *Architectural Record*, 14: 58, 1903, 61.
[19] Burnap, George, Thomas Hastings on Small Parks, *Architectural Record*, 51, June 1922, 282.
[20] "Parks: Large and Small," *American Homes and Gardens*, July 1906, 18 & 28.

by shifting the balance between his picturesque park aesthetic and playground enthusiasts' demands; the result in Parsons' parks was decreased landscape and increased unadorned space set aside for recreation equipment and play.

During his tenure, Parsons first trained as an unpaid superintendent of planting under Calvert Vaux, eventually became the salaried superintendent of parks, and after Vaux' death, spent his last thirteen years at the Parks Department as their landscape architect.[21] It is in this final role that Parsons designed four of the city's new small parks generated from the Small Parks Act. Though Vaux's and Carrère and Hastings' parks were retrofitted with playgrounds and recreation facilities within three to six years of their opening, Parsons designed these elements into his initial parks' plans.

Parsons' father, Samuel Baum Parsons, was a well-known horticulturalist who owned a successful nursery in Flushing, Queens. Known for importing exotic plants and growing hardy azaleas, the elder Parsons was the first in the United States to propagate rhododendrons. He introduced several new species of trees to the country, including Pink Dogwood, Valencia Orange, Japanese Maple and the Weeping Beech.[22] As a boy, young Parsons apprenticed in his father's nursery where he became well versed in native and exotic plant species.[23] He graduated from Yale University's Sheffield Scientific School in 1862, after which he served the remainder of the Civil War in the United States Sanitary Commission; Frederick Law Olmsted was the Commission's organizer, but there is no record that Parsons and Olmsted met during the war.[24]

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[21] Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, 289.

[22] Vivian Raynor, "Art: A Landscape Artist Who Left His Mark," *New York Times*, March 26, 1995; and Alan Petrulis, "Metropolitan Postcard Club of New York City: The Parsons Legacy," December 14, 2007, 1, *metropostcard.com*, as accessed December 1, 2012.

[23] Mabel Parsons, Editor, *Memories of Samuel Parsons*, New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1926, 8.

[24] Norman T. Newton, "Chapter XXVI: Founding of the American Society of Landscape Architects," *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, 390.

Despite maintaining an ongoing interest in his father's nursery, managing his own New Jersey farm and laying out landscapes for wealthy patrons, Parsons had no experience in municipal parks administration or maintenance when he joined the city's Parks Department.[25]

Parsons met Vaux and Olmsted when they ordered plants and trees for Central and Prospect Parks from his father. The elder Parsons' nursery played an important role in the implementation of Olmsted and Vaux parks plans; his experience was instrumental in matching some fourteen hundred different plant species to their new locations.[26] Parsons Jr. knew their reputation long before he returned from Yale and the war to find that they had become important regular customers at his father's nursery. Parsons Jr's lifetime experience with plant material and landscape may have impressed Vaux; eventually he invited Parsons to join Vaux & Company.[27]

Like Downing, Vaux and Olmsted, Parsons shared William Wordsworth's ideal that natural scenery, through its beauty and power, could enrich people's lives, and this became key to Parsons' design goals. "Parks, like paintings or poetry," he wrote, "should suggest thoughts of potent and distinct influence on the mind. The thoughts … should … arouse the mind and uplift and vivify the spirit."[28] Parsons revered and adopted Vaux's landscape design theory, as defined in Vaux's essay, "Sky and Skyline," where he described how a landscape architect, like a landscape artist, must consider the composition of the landscape in which the arrangements of materials (plants rocks, trees, water, flowers, etc.) are part of the artistic process.[29]

Seven years after Parsons' appointment as landscape architect, the Parks Department

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[25] Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park, 289.*

[26] Alan Petrulis, "Metropolitan Postcard Club of New York City: The Parsons Legacy," December 14, 2007, 2, *metropostcard.com*, as accessed December 1, 2012.

[27] Mabel Parsons, 3; and, "Samuel Parsons Dies at 78 Years; Nationally Known Landscape Architect Succumbs at the San Remo Hotel," *New York Times*, February 4, 1923.

[28] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "Public Parks," in *The Art of Landscape Architecture: Its Development and its Application to Modern Landscape Gardening*, New York - Knickerbocker Press, 1915, 278.

[29] Calvert Vaux and Samuel Parsons, Jr., *Concerning Lawn Planting*, New York: Orange Judd Company, 1881.

twice had a short-term vacancy in the commissioner's seat; Parsons was appointed interim Parks commissioner both times, in 1905 and 1907, while he continued his work as landscape architect. In his second interim term as commissioner, he recruited the *Bureau of Municipal Research* to conduct an investigation of the Parks Department. They compiled data on all parks properties, the dates and costs of their acquisitions, departmental structures, management, accounting and auditing methods, contract work regulations, etc. Parsons' goal was to increase Parks Department management transparency, thereby reducing potential future opportunities for corruption and graft. The Bureau's *Report* indicated departments that lacked auditing oversight, resulting in detriment to the Parks Department. Many of the 1908 Bureau *Report* recommendations were eventually implemented in the Parks Department.[30]

Parsons followed Vaux's example in writing about landscape; he penned news articles, letters to editors, gave interviews as the parks' spokesman, wrote books and articles about European city parks, Central Park and residential landscaping. His writing documented the evolution of his education on landscape design. Parsons' last book was edited and published posthumously in 1926, by his daughter, Mabel Parsons; *Memories of Samuel Parsons* differed from his previous works, as in it he discussed people as well as landscape; of some he spoke quite highly, and others not so much. Parsons' *Memories* details his various jobs in the Parks Department and is an excellent resource for New York City parks historians.[31]

Parsons and Vaux's first use of the Small Parks Act's annual budget was to re-landscape

[30] Bureau of Municipal Research, *The Park Question, Part 1: Critical Study and Constructive Suggestions pertaining to Administrative and Accounting Methods of the Department of Parks: Manhattan and Richmond,* August 1908, *and The Park Question, Part II: Critical Study and Constructive Suggestions Pertaining to Revenue and Deposits of the Department of Parks: Manhattan and Richmond,* September 1908.

[31] Mabel Parsons, *Memories of Samuel Parsons: Landscape Architect of the Department of Public Parks, New York,* New York: Knickerbocker Press, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1926.

five existing parks.[32] As Vaux discovered the sites being acquiring for the new small parks, he created their plans. Vaux designed both the East River Park Extension and Mulberry Bend Park, but it would be up to Parsons, after Vaux's untimely death, in 1895, to implement Vaux's plans. Consequently, these parks are sometimes considered the design of both Vaux and Parsons. The four parks that Parsons designed represent a shift, both in Small Park design, but also in the departmental response to public demand for recreational parks. Parsons' parks, John Jay Park, William H. Seward Park, St. Gabriel's Park and DeWitt Clinton Park, all had playgrounds or outdoor gymnasiums when they opened. Parsons was not opposed to the construction of playgrounds, per se; he just didn't believe they belonged in parks. Unfortunately for Parsons, the year before he was appointed Landscape Architect (1898), the Committee on Small Parks published its recommendations for new small parks; in the *Report*, they emphasized repeatedly the need for playgrounds in the small neighborhood parks.

After Charles Stover appointment as Parks Commissioner, he and Parsons clashed frequently on park procedure. Lacking any landscape design or park administration experience, Stover pushed Parsons hard for more playgrounds. By mid-1911, Stover had maneuvered Parsons out of his job on trumped-up charges about soil mixes.[33] The real problem was that Parsons resisted Stover's demands to replace Vaux's cast iron Bow Bridge in Central Park with a similar "concrete structure" and to install playgrounds and ball fields in Central Park.[34]

Parsons joined many other landscape architects, when he viewed the non-traditional elements of the new parks, like bathhouses, as impositions or "attacks" on the parks. He wrote,

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[32] For more on this please read Chapter Five.

[33] *Minutes of the Park Board of the Department of Parks 1911*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 98; "Stover Would Deny Parsons a Hearing; Friends of Architect Expected to Rally Around Him at Park Board Meeting To-day. Borglum Writes to Gaynor, Commends Parsons as an Able Public Servant and Calls Stover a Novice and a Dreamer," *New York Times,* April 6, 1911.

[34] "Some Friction with Samuel Parsons and Popularizing the Parks," *New York Times*, April 2, 1911.

> …they want to make an elaborate, expensive building for shelter and baths, the value of which I question very much, and have always questioned whether these baths are just the things to have in the park. I think their place is not in the park, but in the city, just outside a park. I do not see why they should have baths in a park; they will sometimes have a hundred baths and two or three hundred people in there in the morning.[35]

Parsons' early small parks had planting beds and traditional landscape elements, but they were often trampled under and destroyed by children who played in the parks. To minimize their destruction, Parsons fenced in the lawns, planting beds and parks and put benches in front of the planting beds or lawn as an extra precaution, but it remained challenging to prevent the children's destruction of the plant life. Parsons' later small parks, especially St. Gabriel's, were designed with far less plantings; there, the focus was almost entirely on recreation. Parsons was able, however, to include his curvilinear walking paths that both connected the neighboring street openings to the park at the park's edges and produced changing views for those who followed the paths he designed. Because he dealt with topography challenges and shifts in two coastline parks (DeWitt Clinton and John Jay Parks had considerable slopes leaning to their respective rivers), he designed series of stairs along the parks' borders that would meet his curvilinear paths.

Parsons learned, through trial and error with earlier parks, to wait until at least a year after the tenements had been razed on a future park site before building the new park. The typical preparation for a park would require that the building materials from the razed tenements be collapsed into their cellars. Eventually, fill was brought in, placed over the tenement foundations, and then, the park would be built on top of the fill. When the Department didn't wait at least a year for the fill to settle over the buried foundations and building materials, the walking paths and structures built on top of them would crack as the earth below settled.[36]

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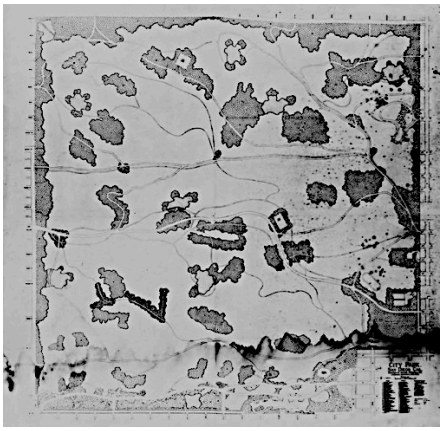
[35] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "Small City Parks," *Transactions of the American Society of Landscape Architects 1899-1908*, Meeting of March 6, 1906, 78.

[36] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "Small City Parks," *Transactions of the American Society of Landscape Architects 1899-1908*, Meeting of March 6, 1906, 75.

One of his Parsons' parks included a unique new concept for the city: a farm gardening school. It was so successful that its program would be implemented in several other small parks over the next several years.[37] For more on this program, please see Chapter 2.8 and Chapter 7.3.

In private practice, Parsons coordinated with landscape architects George Pentecost and George Cooke to design City Park (now, Balboa Park) in San Diego, California and Asheville, North Carolina's Albemarle Park.[38] [Figure 4.19, 4.190, 4.191] In an important contribution to their profession, Parsons and ten other landscape architects from across the country founded the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) on January 4, 1899.[39] He was ASLA's first Vice President, then President, in 1902 and 1906. The organization had three key goals:

1. Establish landscape architecture as a recognized profession in North America,
2. Develop educational studies in landscape architecture, and
3. Provide a voice of authority in the 'New Profession.' [40]



[Figure 4.19] Plan: City Park, S. Parsons, Jr. "The Panama-California Exposition, San Diego, 1915: Olmsted Brothers' Ecological Park Typology," *Journal-Society of Architectural Historians*, 70:1, March 2011, 68.

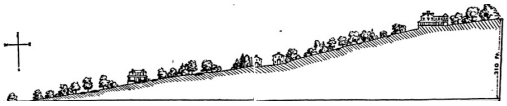
[Figure 4.190] Cabrillo Canyon: City Park, San Diego, 1903 S. Parsons, Jr.; San Diego History Center

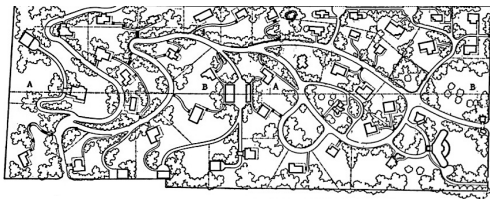
[37] Henry G. Parsons, *Children's Gardens for Pleasure, Health and Education*, New York: Sturgis & Walton, 1910.

[38] Christine Edstrom O'Hara, "The Panama-California Exposition, San Diego, 1915: The Olmsted Brothers' Ecological Park Typology," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 70: 1, March 2011, 64-81.

[39] Norman T. Newton, "Chapter XXVI: Founding of the American Society of Landscape Architects," *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, 387. Parsons' co-founders of the ASLA were Nathan Barrett, Beatrix Jones Farrand, Daniel Langton, Charles Lowrie, Warren Manning, John C. Olmsted, Frederick L. Olmsted, Jr., George Pentecost, Jr., Ossian Simonds & Downing Vaux.

[40] Amber Bravo, "An Introduction to Landscape Design," *Dwell,* April 2009, 113.





[Figure 4.191] "Longitudinal Section" "Plan: Arrangements of Roads & House Lots"
Both, from "Albemarle Park: Ashville, NC," Samuel Parsons, Jr., *How to Plan the Home Grounds*, NY: Doubleday & McClure, 1901, 180-181.

Finally, Parsons went to great lengths to protect Vaux and Olmsted's landscapes. He was well known for his efforts to keep inappropriate developments out of the parks. One potential parks crisis occurred after General Grant died and Mayor William Grace told Grant's family that they could build his tomb in any of the city's parks. They chose Central Park's Mall. Horrified, Parsons patiently drove Grant's widow and son around the city, ultimately showing them that the high point of land on Riverside Drive at West 122nd Street would give Grant's tomb much more prominence as it could be seen by river or road. Siting the tomb on Riverside Drive was no less offensive to Parsons than siting it in the park, but in the tomb to that location, he hoped to avoid the establishment of a tomb building precedent in Central Park.

Parsons did not like to compromise his own park values for people with private agendas, even for Stover, who demanded recreation facilities be built in Central Park. Parsons later wrote that "the…most important principle…of city planning…is for both architect and landscape architect to remember…they are designing for a community of various members having various needs and desires … they should always consider well tradition and peculiar inherited conditions. They should not design for individuals, or even groups of individuals, but for the whole community understood in the broadest terms."[41] Parsons usually followed his own advice. Stover was simply the messenger, however offensive to Parsons, as he represented a rapidly increasing community of people who wanted recreation facilities designed into their parks.

[41] Parsons, Samuel, "Public Parks," in *The Art of Landscape Architecture: Its Development and its Application to Modern Landscape Gardening*, New York - Knickerbocker Press, 1915, 304.

4.2 Architecture

Howard & Cauldwell

John Galen Howard (1864-1931) and Samuel Milbank Cauldwell (1863-1916) designed the pavilion for the first small park: Mulberry Bend Park (now, Columbus Park) in 1897. Howard studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but left before completion of his degree, and then drafted for Henry Hobson Richardson. After Richardson's 1886 death, he worked with McKim, Mead and White; with the assistance of McKim, Mead and White, he studied architecture again, from 1890 to 1893 at the École des Beaux-Arts. Despite earning high marks, Howard left again before completing his studies; however, Howard's work during his career would reflect his Parisian Beaux-Arts training.

Following his 1884 Princeton University graduation, Cauldwell worked as a civic engineer for Newell Universal Mills, and then, for Bentley-Knight Electric Railway Company.[42]

Howard & Cauldwell were partners from 1893, until early 1901, when Howard moved to Berkeley, California.[43] Despite the economic depression of 1893, Howard & Cauldwell had several early commissions, including residential architecture in Long Island. They placed second, after Carrere & Hastings, but before McKim, Mead & White, in the city's 1897 Public Library design competition.[44] In addition, they designed New York's Essex and Renaissance Hotels, Majestic Theater (Boston), the Ladies Christian Union's Young Women's House, Newark High School and Central Park's Gapstow Bridge.[45] [Figure 4.20, 4.21]

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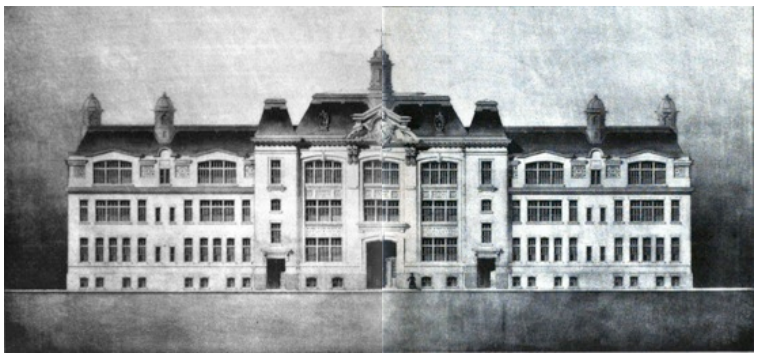
[42] "Samuel M. Cauldwell," *The Score of Years: Record of the Class of 1884, Princeton, 20th Anniversary,* New York: The Gilliss Press, 1904, 34.

[43] *The Engineering Record*, 43:4, January 26, 1901, 90.

[44] Harry Miller Lydenburg, "Chapter XIX: The Central Building, 1897-1911," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 25:8, August 1921, 505.

[45] "Samuel Cauldwell, '84," *The Princeton Alumni Weekly*, 16:24, March 22, 1916, 574; and, Sally Woodbridge, *John Galen Howard and the University of California: the Design of a Great Public University Campus,* London:

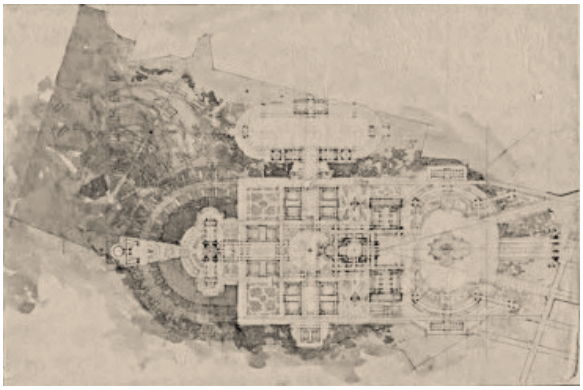


[Figure 4.20] Newark High School 1898, Howard & Cauldwell
American Architect & Building News, 61, July 8.1898, 49-54.

[Figure 4.21] Capstow Bridge, Central Park
Inland Architect, 32: 5, December 1898, 71.

Cauldwell later worked for Andrew J. Robinson General Building Contractors, a successful design-construction firm in the city, and then, started his own successful contracting firm: Cauldwell, Wingate and Company.[46] In addition, Cauldwell wrote plays for children.[47]

Howard moved to California; he & Cauldwell had submitted plans in the design competition for the new University in Berkeley. [Figure 4.22] They placed forth; Parisian Émile Bénard won the competition, but Bénard had difficulty siting his plans on Berkeley's sloping topography. In 1901, Phoebe Apperson Hearst, sponsor of both competition and construction, hired Howard to manage the project instead. His success led to his appointment as Dean of the Architecture School, where he stayed until his death, in 1931.[48]

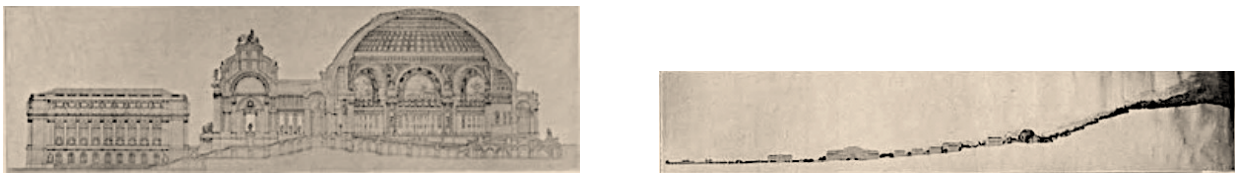


University of California Press, 2002, 21. The Majestic Theater is on the National Register of Historic Places.

[46] *The Score of Years: Record of the Class of 1884, Princeton, 20th Anniversary,* NY: The Gilliss Press, 1904, 34-37.

[47] Samuel M. Cauldwell, *Chocolate Cake and Black Sand, and Two other Plays,* NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1917.

[48] J.G. Howard Dies, *New York Times,* July 19, 1931.



[Figure 4.22] Design Entry submitted by Architects Howard, Cauldwell & Morgan, NY, for Phoebe Hearst Competition for University of California, *Inland Architect & News Record, 34:4,* November 1899

Arnold W. Brunner

A New York City Jew of Austrian and British heritage, Arnold William Brunner (1857-1925) was educated in Manchester, England and New York, and was a graduate of the special architectural course in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he trained under William R. Ware (Ware later founded Columbia University's School of Architecture), graduating in 1879. [Figure 4.23] His spent his early career working under George B. Post, then formed Brunner & Tyron with classmate Thomas Tyron, with whom he worked from 1886 to 1897. One of the founding members of the Architectural League of New York (1881), Brunner would later serve as their president. He designed many important structures in New York City and elsewhere, but won his most important commissions from Jewish organizations. He and Tyron designed Temple Beth El (1893), Congregation Shaaray Tefila (1894), Temple Shearith Israel (1897) and the West End Synagogue. Brunner designed the Building for the Educational Alliance (1891), which they named the Hebrew Institute; it was, and is, located across the street from Seward Park at 197 East Broadway. Paid for by a group of wealthy, but generous, German-Jewish philanthropists, it was built as an educational center for Jewish immigrants to learn English, gain job skills, and become "Americanized."[49] After dissolution of his partnership with Tyron, he won the Mt. Sinai

Arnold William Brunner Architect, Moses King, *Notable New Yorkers*, 1899, 398 [Figure 4.23]

[49] "Work Among Hebrews: Dedication of the New Building of the Institute," *New York Times*, November 9, 1891.

Hospital design competition (1904), designed the School of Mines (Lewisohn Hall, Columbia University, 1906), Jewish Theological Seminary and Barnard Hall (Barnard College, 1916).

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition influenced Brunner's work, as afterwards, he designed structures with more classical elements and temple-like features than before. His public bathhouses, built just after his 1903 bathhouse in William H. Seward Park, at 538 East 11th Street (1904) and Asser Levy Place and East 23rd Street (1905, with William M. Aiken), were Romanesque with rusticated limestone, large arches and raised plinths. One of his best examples of ennobling architecture was his bathhouse for William H. Seward Park; it was a temple of bathing with a raised plinth, a classical ionic arcade and a balustraded roof.

Barney & Chapman

James Stewart Barney (1869-1924) and Henry Otis Chapman (1862-1929) designed a bathing pavilion and a pergola for DeWitt Clinton Park, both of which were built between 1904 and 1905.[50] Educated in Cornell University's School of Architecture, Chapman graduated in 1890. Barney studied at Columbia University, from where he too graduated in 1890, after which he studied architecture at the École Des Beaux-Arts in Paris. By the mid-1890s, Barney & Chapman began working together in New York, and until they split into solo practices in about 1908, they worked well together, designing churches, public buildings and residential architecture, including several Long Island estate homes. An early participant in planning "Colonial Williamsburg," Barney refused the 1924 design commission, saying the project would take "half a generation."[51] Later, he shifted his artistic focus to landscape painting."[52]

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[50] For more information on Barney and Chapman, please see: Montgomery Schuyler, "The work of Barney & Chapman," *Architectural Record*, 16, September 1904, 204-296.

[51] George Humphrey Yetter, "Designers of Beauty: Academic Training and Williamsburg's Architectural Restoration," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal,* Winter 2012, www.history.org, as accessed March 30, 2013

[52]Guy Lawrence & Anne Surchin, *Houses of the Hamptons, 1880-1930,* New York: Acanthus Press, 2007, 322.

Among Barney & Chapman's more important public buildings were Grace Chapel (1896, now Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church), Hart Memorial Library (1897-Troy, NY), Church of the Holy Trinity and the adjoining complex (1899), Hotel Navarre (1900), Thomas Asylum for Orphan and Destitute Indian Children (1901-Iroquois, NY), Pavilion: Morningside Park (1904), and the Broadway Tabernacle (1905). Despite Barney's Beaux-Arts training, many of their designs, especially pre-1893 World's Columbian Exposition, were neo-gothic. Barney questioned why American architects placed such design emphasis on only "modern" French? He called for more balanced architectural design, and made his plea for gothic design in America.[53]

Jaroslav Kraus

Jaroslav Kraus (1884-1946) was a native New Yorker who attended Cooper Union for architecture school, after which he took a job at the Parks Department, working his way up to Chief Architect for the Parks Department. Eventually, he moved to New York State's Department of Public Works, where he became an associate architect.[54] Kraus owned a real estate company, the Jaros Kraus Company, with which he sold both residential and commercial property in the NewYork City area. He was a charter member of the Albany Artists Group, and through them, exhibited many of his own paintings. Kraus designed the Recreation Building at John Jay Park and may have been assisted by Charles Schmieder, also a Cooper Union architecture graduate.

Howard Caparn

Howard Caparn (1864-1945) was born in England and educated in art and architecture in at Paris' École des Beaux-Arts. In the 1890s, Caparn moved to Pittsburgh, to work for six years

[53] Barney, J. S., "The Ecole des Beaux Arts, Its Influence on Our Architecture," *Architectural Record*, XXII-5, November 1907, 333-342.

[54] "Obituary: Jaros Kraus," *Long Island City Star Journal*, January 10, 1946, 17.

in Wilkinson Elliot's landscape gardening firm. Finally, he moved to New York City where in 1902, he opened his landscape architecture firm. As such, Caparn worked as Parks consultant; his most important Parks projects involved the creation of landscape plans for the Bronx Zoo and the Botanical Gardens. With Charles Lay, Caparn assisted on the John Jay Park plan.

Theodore Videto

Theodore Ernest Videto (1888-1877) (active AIA, 1903-1938), a native of Havana, Cuba, was a State Architect in Havana, when he was married in 1902.[55] In 1910, a $40,000 pergola designed by Videto was erected opposite Grants Tomb. It is a two story structure, not unlike several structures in the small parks, its lower floor housed the comfort stations while the upper floor served as an open air colonnade with fluted granite Doric columns supporting the roof. A broad staircase at each end of the pergola curved around the structure to give access to the comfort stations below. In 1925 and again in 1926, Parks engineer Gustavo Steinacher would replicate Videto's pergola design. The first structure was built at Inspiration Point, where West 190th Street meets the northbound Riverside Drive (now, West Side Highway) and the second was in the East River (Carl Schurz) Park.

4.3 Recreation Design

Charles B. Stover

Charles Bunstein Stover (1861-1929) was appointed Manhattan Park Commissioner and President of the board by Mayor William Gaynor in January 1910. Stover had no experience in landscape design but he had developed, with Abram Hewitt and Seth Low, the New York Society for Parks and Playgrounds in 1891, and later, in 1898 with Lillian Wald, he created the Outdoor

[55] "Videto-Roth Wedding," *New York Times*, September 11, 1902.

Recreation League (ORL). His education, first at Lafayette College (1881) and then, Union Theological Seminary (1883) was in religion. Perhaps it was his religious training that helped him rally people behind the cause that he found important, namely, that of creating healthy recreational environments for poor children to play in.

Stover's post-education work experience included preaching "Presbyterianism to cowboys in the Dakotas" followed by the study of Theology in Berlin.[56] While in Berlin, he studied theological literature, and there, began to question his faith. By the time he moved to New York in 1885, he no longer wanted to preach, but instead, sought to devote his life to humanitarian purposes. He was befriended by Stanton Coit, who in 1886 founded the Lower East Side's Neighborhood Guild; later, under Stover's leadership, the failing Guild was reorganized as the University Settlement, the first of its type set up to assist the poor and recent immigrants adapt to life in their new country. Stover lived quite modestly in the Settlement, in a small, dark room, surrounded by stacks of old newspapers, from 1886 until his death in 1929.[57]

Given his perspective, Stover was a persistent advocate of the immigrant poor; he and Lillian Wald frequently appeared at the parks commissioners' meetings between 1887 and 1903 to request playgrounds be built into the city's new small parks. While they waited for the Parks Department to act, Stover and Weld rallied middle and upper class New Yorkers to donate towards the construction of playgrounds. They installed several playgrounds, with attendants, into unimproved empty lots in poor neighborhoods throughout in the city; included in these were sites that had been acquired by the city for small parks, cleared of their tenements, but not yet "improved" as parks. Though William H Seward Park did not open until 1903, the city acquired the land in 1897; the ORL set up a playground there in 1898. During his 1902-04 term, Mayor

[56] Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park,* 411.
[57] J.K. Paulding, *Charles B. Stover 1861-1929: His Life and Personality*, NY: The International Press, 1938, 21.

Seth Low had the city take over the administration and costs of many of the ORL playgrounds.

Stover established the nation's first Bureau of Recreation in 1910, five years after the small parks' construction. His Bureau would promote inter-park athletic competitions that proved wildly popular with the children in the city. Parsons did not care for Stover's lack of reverence for landscaped parks, but he tried to comply with his new boss's demands. On some issues Parsons tried to wait Stover out, knowing that a new mayor would bring a new appointee as the Parks Commissioner. After his 1910 appointment, Stover pressured Parsons to carry out his ideas, including straightening the curvilinear paths in Central Park, replacing the cast iron bow bridge with one constructed in concrete, creating a grand bridge and museum parkway to connect the Metropolitan Museum of Art with the Museum of Natural History, and replacing the Arsenal with the soon to be demolished Lenox Library.[58] By April 1911, Stover pushed Parsons out of his job on trumped-up charges about soil mixes.[59] Stover would last only three years as Parks Commissioner; one day in October 1913, he didn't return from lunch, and after two weeks of worrying and searching by his friends and coworkers, he mailed in a letter of resignation.

Charles Downing Lay

In 1902, Charles Downing Lay (1877-1956) was only the second person to earn a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture from Harvard University's School of Architecture. With Henry V. Hubbard, the first graduate of Harvard's program, Lay co-founded *Landscape Architecture* Magazine in 1910 and served as its editor and manager until 1921. When Charles Stover forced Samuel Parsons out of his job in 1911, Lay was appointed Landscape

[58] Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park,* 415-416, and "Some Friction with Samuel Parsons and Popularizing the Parks," *New York Times*, April 2, 1911.

[59] *Minutes of the Park Board of the Department of Parks 1911*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 98; "Stover Would Deny Parsons a Hearing; Friends of Architect Expected to Rally Around Him at Park Board Meeting To-day. Borglum Writes to Gaynor, Commends Parsons as an Able Public Servant and Calls Stover a Novice and a Dreamer," *New York Times,* April 6, 1911.

Architect of the Parks Department, with the approval of Mayor William Gaynor, and in Stover's absence, by Queens Parks Commissioner Walter Eliot.[60] But, Lay had the same reverence for parks landscapes that Parsons did, so he and Stover were destined to clash over their preferences in park use.

In a 1921 article that Lay wrote for *Landscape Architecture,* he argued the importance of diligence and maintenance of urban parks, and the value of an accompanying budget to keep a city's parks pristine. In a 1911 editorial, before he worked for the Parks Department, he wrote of the importance of preserving park landscapes as parks, and not using them as playgrounds. He wrote that, "the value of a park to the community is not to be gauged by its success in developing strong muscles;" its success, he argued, is in its provision of "helpful stimulation and relief from the city's oppression to all the people – rich, poor, young and old. The playground, on the contrary, is for one class only – the children."[61] Needless to say, when Stover demanded that that Lay design playgrounds into Central Park, Lay objected. He stayed in the position of landscape architect for the Parks Department, under Stover, for only two years, from 1912-1913.

Gustavo J. Steinacher

Appointed in 1924 as the Chief Engineer of the Parks Department, Gustavo J. Steinacher (1877-1947) participated in the design of a few of the city's more controversial projects, including the paving of the Harlem River Speedway (1922) and the creation of the Central Park's 59th Street and Sixth Avenue entrance and its ajoining Center Drive (1924). These projects promoted heated debate about preservation and revering the initial park's plan. Likewise, his Central Park Tennis House (1930) prompted arguments over building in the park. But the design

[60] "C.D. Lay Named Park Architect," *New York Times*, August 11, 1911.

[61] Charles D. Lay, editor, "Parks and Playgrounds," *Landscape Architecture*, Volume 1, Oct 1910-July 1911, 97.

and construction of his St. Gabriel's Park Field House engendered no argument from the neighborhood surrounding the park; they had been waiting almost twenty years for it.

Having an Engineer design a park building signalled a shift in the Parks Department; they moved from using celebrated architects and high end materials to create ennobling structures to using cost-effective designs of on-staff engineers, which focused on durable materials and long-term efficiency. Steinacher's Field House was a simple brick utilitarian structure, far removed from buildings constructed in the small parks only on twenty years previous. A native of Puerto Rico, Steinacher studied engineering at Cornell University, then taught mathematics at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and finally, spent thirteen years as a Parks Department engineer, during which he was appointed the Chief Engineer. Despite the focus on frugality, Steinacher could design beautiful as well as economic structures; his 1925 Inspiration Point Shelter closely followed former Parks architect Videto's 1910 Shelter sited opposite Grant's Tomb.[4.30 a, b]

[Figure 4.30 a, b] Gustavo Steinacher: *Ispiration Point*, West 190th Street at the Hudson River
a] 1927: BridgesandParks.wordpress.com b] 2012: Mywalkingpictures.blogspot.com

Robert Moses

By 1940, most of the small parks would see dramatic changes, and Carrère and Hastings' Parks were no exception. Robert Moses create an enormous legacy in New York with his work on bridges, tunnels, roads, parkways, highways, and beach development. But before he developed so much of the city's infrastructure, he systematically upgraded and changed almost

every small park in the five boroughs. Where there wasn't a playground, he had one installed and where there was one already, he upgraded it. He added baseball and soccer fields, tennis, racquetball and basketball courts, running tracks and bocce courts. Taking advantage of funds from the Work Progress Administration, Moses carried on his greatest feat in the parks during the late 1930s: he installed large outdoor, public pools with free learn-to-swim programs.

Aymar Embury II


Aymar Embury II (1937)
Photo: Hofstra University
[Figure 4.31]

Aymar Embury II (1880-1966) was a valuable member of the Department of Parks design team between 1934 and the 1950s. A graduate of Princeton University in Civil Engineering (1900) and Architecture (1901), [Figure 4.31] Embury taught in Princeton's Architecture School, and then went into practice designing upscale homes for the upper and middle class. During World War I, he served in the Army Corps of Engineers. After Moses was appointed by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia as the Commissioner of the unified Department of Parks in 1934, he invited Embury to work with the Department as architect and often, as a consulting architect.

Embury is best known for his public works, particularly the pools created with the use of Works Progress Administration funds and the New York City building at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair. In addition, he was the principal architect and engineer on the Triborough (1936), Henry Hudson (1936) and the Bronx-Whitestone (1939) Bridges.[62] [Figure 4.32]


[Figure 4.32] Triborough Bridge
Photo: Richard Perry *New York Times,* 2009

[62] "Aymar Embury, Architect, Dead: Designer of Many Buildings and Bridges Here was 86," *New York Times,* November 14, 1966.

Embury's work in the small parks included pools and structures in most of the eight parks.

Gilmore Clarke

Gilmore D. Clarke (1892-1982) studied civil engineering and landscape at Cornell University, where he graduated in 1913, and later, returned in 1938 to become the Dean of the School of Architecture. [Figure 4.33] In between his time at Cornell, he worked for the Westchester County Parkway Commission, where he designed the Bronx River, Saw Mill and Hutchinson River Parkways. Moses invited Clarke in 1934 to consult as Landscape Architect to the Department of Parks; as such, he consulted on countless city parks, both large and small. His more important landscape designs for the Parks Department were Central Park's Conservatory Gardens, and the World's Fair site at Flushing, Queens. In 1935, Clarke formed a civil engineering and landscape architectural firm of Clarke & Rapuano with Michael Rapuano.


Gilmore Clarke, Dean, Architecture School, Cornell University 1938
[Figure 4.33]

While serving as the National Commission of Fine Arts first Chairman (1937-1950), Clarke had the distinction of being dismissed by President Harry S. Truman after he told Truman that the balcony he wanted build was "in conflict with the basic design of the White House."[63]

Ole Singstad

Ole Singstad (1882-1969) was a Norwegian born civil engineer who created Holland Tunnel's ventilation system and had earlier, designed San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. As Chief Engineer of the New York Tunnel Authority, he designed and managed the construction of the Lincoln Tunnel, the Queens Midtown Tunnel, and the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel. Midtown

[63] Thomas Ennis, "Gilmore D. Clarke, 90, Dead, Designed Major Public Works," *New York Times*, August 10, 1982.

Tunnel access, as he designed, required a northbound road cut through St. Gabriel's Park about one forth of the park's length from its westernmost side. St. Gabriel's Church and St. Gabriel's Park Library, as well as everything else on the block between East 36th and East 37th Streets, and First and Second Avenues were razed. To allow cars to travel uninterrupted, from Queens to New Jersey, Singstad had planned a long underground road to one day connect the two tunnels.

Ignaz Pilat

Ignaz Pilat was an Austrian born landscape gardener who had studied botany in Vienna where he worked as the assistant director of the Viennese Botanical Garden, until his escape after the student uprising there in 1848. By 1858, he was hired to be the Chief Gardener of Central Park, and as such was instrumental in laying out the Park. Later, he would work on the five triangular parks for the new Department of Public Parks.

Carl F. Pilat

Carl Pilat (1876-1933), the nephew of Ignaz Pilat, was a landscape architect who earned his bachelor degree from the School of Agriculture at Cornell University in 1900. Serving for five years as the Parks Department's Landscape Architect, he was known to try to protect the parks from inappropriate landscape or architectural interventions in the parks. He designed several large estates in New Jersey, Long Island, and Westchester County.

Maud Sargent

Maud Sargent (1899-1992) was an important landscape architect who re-landscaped East River/Carl Schurz Park when in 1939, the East River drive was constructed and the park was extended over the drive. She continued working on Carl Schurz Park, until 1943.

5.0 Renovation of Existing Small Parks

After the passage of the Small Parks Act, Mayor Hewitt pressed the Parks Department to quickly rehabilitate and re-open five existing small parks. Canal Street, Christopher Street, and Duane Street Parks, along with Jackson Square and Abingdon Square were all city owned-triangular shaped parks formed by the way the streets surrounding them came together, resulting in their irregularly shaped lots. All five parks had been owned by the city for many years, but were in varied states of deterioration; all were less than one third of an acre, with the largest, Canal Street Park, at 0.318 acres and the smallest, Duane Street Park, at 0.108 acre; all five parks were on the west side of Manhattan, between 14th Street and Duane Street, and all were in crowded tenement neighborhoods. Some had locked gates, barring effectively, their use by all but those in possession of a key. Though the Small Parks Act clearly calls for the creation of *new* parks in the city's most densely populated regions, the first use of funds from the Small Parks Act budget was to re-design these parks.

Consulting Landscape Architect Calvert Vaux and Parks Superintendent Samuel Parsons, Jr. requested the Park's Board of Commissioners grant a $25,000 appropriation for this rehabilitation project.[1] But, it wasn't until the following April, after numerous requests to act delivered to the parks commissioners from the Mayor's office, they finally approved the $25,000 appropriation.[2] Vaux re-designed these five small parks, while Parsons used his extensive knowledge of plant materials to fill in Vaux's planting beds and help with tree selections.

While the Landscape Architect and the Superintendent set about implementing their park plans, some of the residents living around Abingdon Square appeared at a May 16, 1888 commissioners' meeting to express their concerns over the possibility of their small

[1] *Minutes of the Parks Board*, July 11, 1887, Department of Public Parks, City of New York, 1887-88, 163.
[2] *Minutes of the Parks Board*, April 25, 1888, Department of Public Parks, City of New York, 1887-88, 598.

neighborhood park being opened to public access. The commissioners referred them to the Superintendent of Parks.[3] Mayor Hewitt kept up his pressure on the parks commissioners by repeatedly inquiring about the status of the children's parks.[4] In early September, Parsons returned to the commissioners to request another appropriation of $1,200 to finish the rehabilitation project. The commissioners transferred money from the 1888 appropriation allocated to Riverside Park's improvement."[5] By the end of 1888, the triangular parks' renovations were complete and the funds were exhausted.[6]

When Parsons wrote in the July 1892 *Scribner's Magazine* about his and Vaux's work in these triangular parks, he was clearly delighted with their success. He was careful to give ample credit to Hewitt for the gift to the public of these remade parks:

> One of the best features of Mr. A.S. Hewitt's reign as mayor was his persistent advocacy of the opening of these small parks in the interest of the crowded tenements that surrounded them ... during his term … to him is chiefly due the credit of giving to the public the use of: Jackson Square, Abingdon Square, Canal Street Park, Duane Street Park and Christopher Street Park.[7]

Parsons went on to describe their work in the parks as "very simple." They created "bordering plantations of trees and shrubs...fortunately, fences already existed around the plots. The walks either wound around the outskirts along the fence, leaving a border for planting of five or ten feet."[8] Parsons confessed his concern that the neighborhood's use of the park, especially given its dense population, would bring daily "utter destruction" to the new shrubs, flowers and grass, but three years of use proved his concerns unfounded:

People, as a rule, treat the place with respect, and often themselves reprimand grown up

[3] *Minutes,* May 16, 1888, 1888-89, 26.
[4] *Minutes*, July 25, 1888, 1888-9, 164.
[5] *Minutes*, September 5, 1888, 1888-8, 226.
[6] *Minutes*, September 20, 1888, 1888-9, 270; and, *Minutes*, October 24, 1888, 1888-9, 341-2
[7] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 114.
[8] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 114.

> people and children who seem to be likely to injure the grass or flowers. There is actually a guard set by the neighbors, and, to our surprise, the grass and flowers look as well as they do in Central Park.[9]

Parsons wrote that it was expensive to maintain these small parks, for each one needed a full time gardener in the summer, plus each required its own police officer to maintain the peace. Parsons felt however, that taxpayers would support the parks if they witnessed their impact: "the people, especially the women and the little ones, enjoy the grass and flowers. New York is singularly lacking in grass and trees; these small parks are green oases in the midst of piles of brick and mortar."[10]

Perhaps because of his concerns about foot traffic and destruction, or perhaps in an effort to control costs, in November 1890, Parsons requested the commissioners authorize the implementation of limited park hours for all five parks as 8:00AM to 5:00PM, daily.[11]

The following pages give a brief history of these five small squares and parks. They are listed in order of size, ascending from the smallest to the largest park: Duane Street Park (0.108 acre), Christopher Street Park (0.139 acre), Abingdon Square (0.212 acre), Jackson Square (0.227 acre) and Canal Street Park (0.318). Duane Street Park is part of the Tribeca West Historic District and Jackson Square, Abingdon Square and Christopher Street Park are all part of the Greenwich Village Historic District.[12] Duane Street Park is sometimes referred to as Duane Park; likewise, Canal Street Park is sometimes referred to as Canal Park.

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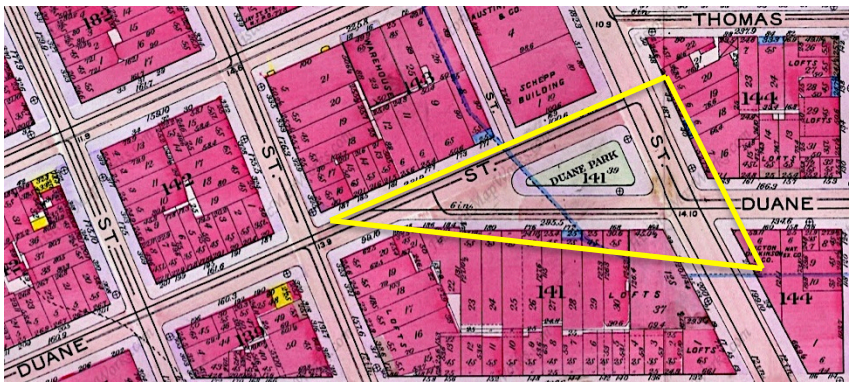
[9] Samuel Parsons, 115.

[10] Ibid, with police officer on, 116.

[11] *Minutes*, November 12, 1890, 1890-91, 237.

[12] Marjorie Pearson and Elisa Urbanelli, editors, *Tribeca West Historic District: Designation Report*, New York City Landmark Preservation Commission, May 7, 1991, 71; and *Greenwich Village Historic District: Designation Report*, City of New York, Landmark Preservation Commission, 1969, Volume 1: 4 & 114, Volume II: 337 & 343-344.

5.1 Duane Street Park



[Figure 5.10] Duane Street Park, 1909, revised 1915, *Atlas of Manhattan*, G.W. Bromley, Plate 9

Duane Street Park, a tiny 0.108-acre triangular park, is located in the irregular space created by the crossing of Duane and Hudson Streets. From the west, Duane Street meets Hudson Street at a different angle than Duane Street meets Hudson Street from the east. The two sections of Duane Street finally meet to the west of Hudson Street, and the triangular form they create by that crossing eventually became a small park. [Figure 4.1] It was the first space acquired by the city of New York for the express purpose of creating a public park. Purchased in 1797 from Trinity Church for five dollars, the site was originally laid out as a public common.[13]

1804 *Minutes* of the Common Council indicate discussion about the as yet, un-named park, un-landscaped or un-fenced park about Trinity's specifications in their sale to the Corporation (the city) that the property was to be "inclosed (sic) in a fence, sodded and ornamented with trees as promotive of health and recreation." The Street Commissioner noted the old fence in the "gaol yard, lately removed from the place where the City Hall is building" and suggested it might be appropriated for the "purpose of fencing this place provided the Inhabitants in the vicinity of it [the park]" provide the funds to install the fence.[14] By the end of

[13] Arthur Everett Peterson, *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York 1784-1831, Volume III, June 22, 1801 to May 13, 1805*, August 27, 1804, 596.

[14] Peterson, 596.

1804, the park had a formal garden designed as a complement to the Federal style, mostly single-family row houses being built around its borders. The park was named after the city's first post-Revolutionary War mayor, and Constitutional Congress member, James Duane [Figure 5.11]

The park was given triangular and circular planting beds, trees, with the old iron fence bordering the site. In 1825, more trees were added to the park.


James Duane, Mayor 1784-89
TeachingAmericanHistory.org
[Figure 5.11]

Around 1860, the surrounding rowhouses starting filling with multiple family, while some of the buildings were converted to commercial use. By the 1890s the area around Duane Street Park was "clogged with wagons and pallets of goods."[15] Between the 1930s and 1950s, the area became a center for butter, eggs and cheese dealers.[16] Now, it has shifted once more, but this time, to a mixed-use neighborhood: part commercial, part restaurants and shops, part wholesale and part residential, and the neighborhood is alive seven days a week.

In 1863, the Board of Aldermen passed a resolution to allow Fire Company 53 to use Duane Street Park to build their new fire station. Mayor George Opdyke vetoed their resolution saying that they proposed to occupy "one of the public places or parks of the City, for a use not designed, when this plot of ground was set apart as a park. There are so few of such places in the lower part of the city, that it appears to me inexpedient to divert this one from its present use, and I have serious doubt whether we can do so without Legislative sanction."[17] In 1882 a firehouse

[15] Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes: Duane Park in TriBeCa: From Butter and Eggs to the Home of Haute Cuisine," *New York Times*, September 27, 1998.

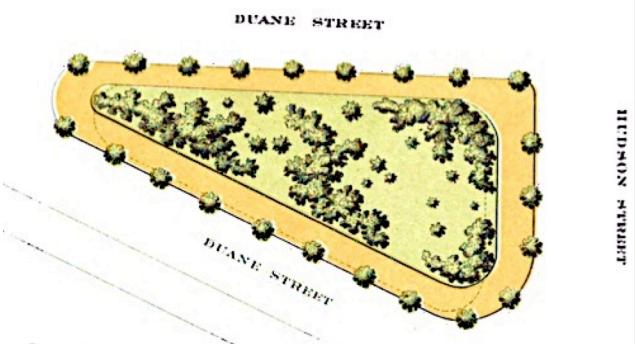
[16] Ibid.

[17] "City Government: Board of Aldermen," *New York Times,* November 23, 1863. Opdyke vetoed the resolution on November 10, 1863.

designed by Napoleon Le Brun & Son was built three blocks away, at 173 Franklin Street.[18]

In 1870, Tammany Boss William Tweed replaced the Board of Commissioners of Central Park, and in its place instituted the Department of Public Parks; the new department took control of the city's parks away from the state and put it in their own hands, with which they embezzled the Department's funds. Tweed's new commissioners were purged in 1871, and the reinstated former commissioners, previously fired by Tweed, took over management of all the city's parks.

The commissioners' 1871 first *Annual Report* described Duane Street Park as one that "possessed a half-destroyed fence, and was in a state of dilapidation."[19] Parks Chief Engineer M. A. Kellogg and Chief Gardener Ignatz A. Pilat re-landscaped Duane Street Park as "an elegant little triangular spot, filled with deciduous trees, evergreens, and shrubs."[20] [Figure 5.12] An iron fence on a granite base surrounded the park on all three sides, with no point of entrance; a caged park viewed the sidewalk. They widened the southern sidewalk from two to ten feet, and narrowed Hudson Street sidewalk from sixteen to ten feet.



[Figure 5.12] "Plan of Improvements, Duane Street Park," *Annual Report, Department of Public Parks, City of NY*, 1871, 236

In 1887, Hewitt wanted this and the other four parks to be opened to the public. With a fence enclosing the entire park, only children who were willing to scale the fence could use the park, and once they got into the park, there were no open areas available for play. He had even received a request from a group of boys in the neighborhood begging him to give them access to the park to play longer through the

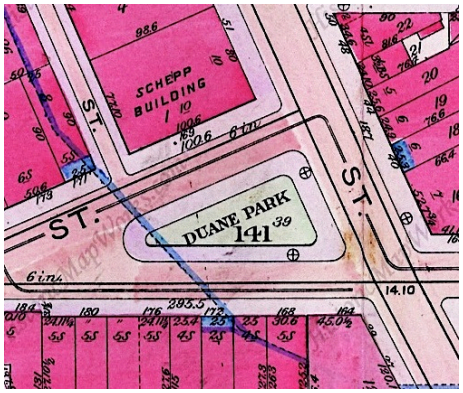
[18] Marjorie Pearson and Elisa Urbanelli, editors, *Tribeca West Historic District: Designation Report*, New York City Landmark Preservation Commission, May 7, 1991, 15.

[19] *The First Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners, Department of Public Parks, City of New York*, New York: W.C. Bryant & Co., 1871, 50.

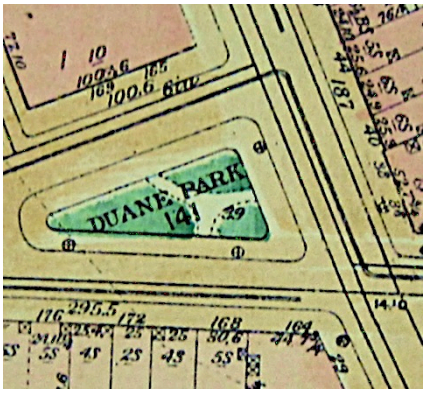
[20] Mr. Pilat died on September 17, 1870, *First Annual Report*, 1871, 285.

day; once the park opened, they wrote Hewitt a thank you note.[21]

Using funds from the Small Parks Act, Calvert Vaux designed Duane Street Park by introducing a diagonal walk that swelled out to a considerable width at one point between the park's three new entrances. Beyond this there are only three small bits of green grass on either side, a few shrubs along the fence and a small flowerbed; but even this was a boon to the crowded neighborhood.[22] The area in the center of the park intended by Vaux for children as a place to gather and play. None of Vaux's drawings of Duane Street Park remain, but we can get an idea of his plan from historic maps. The 1909-1915 map does not appear to include Vaux's plan, but the 1921 map shows Duane Street Park with three access points and a larger clearing in the middle of the green. [Figure 5.13, 5.14]



[Figure 5.13] Duane Street Park, 1909, revised 1915



[Figure 5.14] "Duane Street Park," 1921
G. W. Bromley, & Co, *Atlas of Manhattan*

In the late 1930s, consulting landscape architect Gilmore Clarke worked with Parks landscape architect Janet Patt to develop a Beaux-Arts design for Duane Street Park, in which they reduced plantings, increased concrete and stone surfaces, and added a flagpole, centered on the Hudson Street side of the park. The flagpole's large base was carved with a notation honoring the site's original Dutch landowner, Annetje Jans Bogardus.

[21] "The Thankful Boys," *New York Times*, December 9, 1887; "Not Keeping Faith with the Mayor," *New York Times*, December 15, 1887.

[22] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 115

Clarke and Patt removed the ornate cast iron fence and replaced it with a simple steel one; the Hudson side was given imposing brick columns. All the park's trees were removed and replaced with ten sycamores evenly spaced around the park's perimeter. One sycamore was removed in 1954, when the city shortened the park. To better enable commercial truck traffic on Duane Street, part of the park's western sidewalks and Duane Street plantings were removed, and in their place, Belgian blocks and a concrete barrier were added to prevent trucks from driving into the park.

In 1994, local residents of what had become a transformed residential neighborhood grew tired of their run-down park with its hard packed and barren planting beds, strewn litter, and the marks of countless dogs. Led by Lynn Ellsworth and Oliver Allen, the neighborhood banded together, and pitched in to restore and repair their park.[23] Soon, they formed the "Friends of Duane Park," a non-profit organization, and raised funds, in part, by offering annual tours of their lofts, to re-landscape their park as something resembling the Vaux plan. In 1995, they engaged fellow neighbor Signe Nielsen as their landscape architect to oversee the park's restoration to its former Vaux-like plan. As the park is now part of the TriBeCa Historic District, Nielsen's new plan, which referenced Vaux's old plan, had to approved by the Fine Arts Commission, the Parks Department and the Landmarks Commission, and in 1999, the restoration was complete with historical lamps, benches and an undulating path meant to closely resemble that of the Vaux 1887 plan.[24] [Figure 5.15, 5.16] The fences were repaired and parts of them replaced so that they could keep dogs from trampling the plantings.

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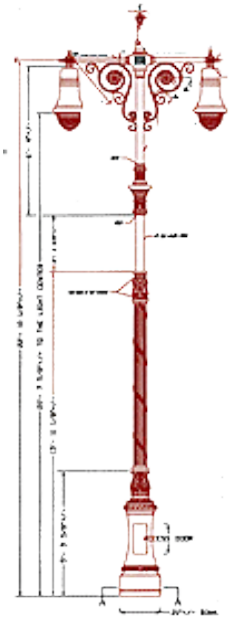
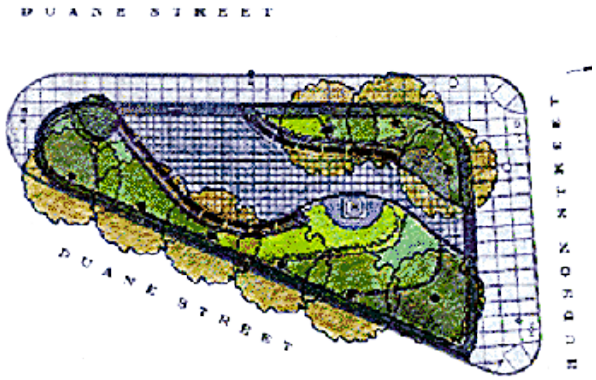
[23] Oliver Allen is the author of numerous gardening books, as well as, *Tales of Old Tribeca,* and *Tribeca: A Pictorial History,* New York, Tribeca Tribune, 2012.

[24] *History of Duane Park: Duane Park Restoration*, Duane Park.org, as accessed December 15, 2012; and Marjorie Pearson and Elisa Urbanelli, editors, *Tribeca West Historic District: Designation Report*, New York City Landmark Preservation Commission*,* May 7, 1991,





[Figure 5.15, 5.16] Signe Nielsen, Park Plan and lamppost:
Duane Park Restoration, Duanepark.org, accessed December 15, 2012.

Flowers-Duane Park
TribecaCitizen.com

From Duanepark.org: Duane Street Park, Bird's eye view, looking south

Horsehead ornament on iron fence

World's fair benches, looking south, Duanepark.org

Duane Street Park, looking east, Duanepark.org

5.2 Christopher Street Park

Christopher Street Park is the second of the five parks that Calvert Vaux re-landscaped as his initial act using Small Park Act funds. The triangular park is a 0.139-acre parcel of what was previously a large Dutch tobacco farm (1633-1638). The farm was subdivided into three farms; Trinity Church and Elbert Herring's farms were to the south of this park and Sir Peter Warren's farm was to the north. Skinner Road, now Christopher Street, was laid out on the property line separating the northern farm from the southern farms; the road name change honored a trustee heir of the Warren estate, Charles Christopher Amos. The street was opened in 1799; Trinity Church ceded the property to the city in 1813.[25] By 1835, the neighborhood around Christopher Street had become densely populated, so after an 1837 large fire raced through the overpopulated neighborhood, several residents petitioned the city to condemn the burned out irregular lot where Christopher Street, West 4th Street and Grove Street came together in order to create an open space. The city complied and Christopher Street Park was created on April 5, 1837. [Figure 5.20]

The Parks Department's 1871 *Annual Report* noted the Christopher Street Triangle was not in need of alterations, but the planting bushes and beds of flowers had improved it.[26] Their plan was to keep it cultivated and maintained. But in 1887, when Vaux and Parsons encountered the Park, that maintenance and cultivation had been missing for a long while. "In Christopher Street Park, the shade from old trees was so dense that only a bordering plantation of shrubs could be secured, and these were mostly privets. No bedding would thrive in such shade."[27]

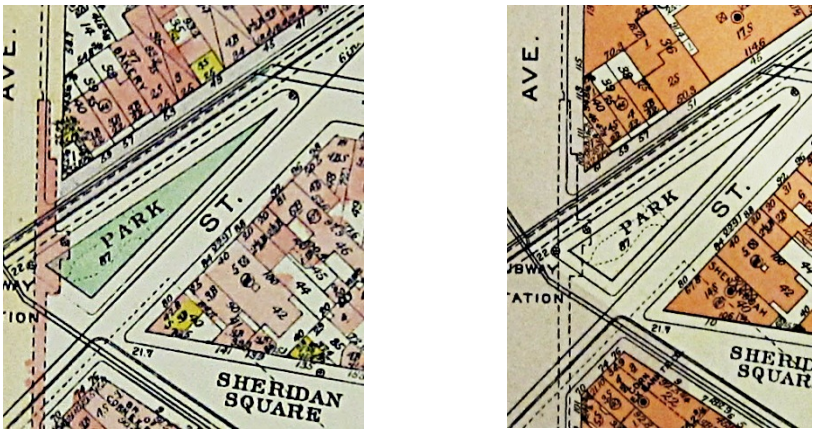
Vaux's treatment in this park was not unlike his work in the other pre-existing triangular parks; he created a three-point access into the park, with one entrance on each side of the

[25] *Greenwich Village Historic District: Designation Report*, *Volume I,* City of New York, Landmark Preservation Commission, 1969, 114.

[26] *The First Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners, Department of Public Parks, City of New York*, New York: W.C. Bryant & Co., 1871, 50.

[27] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 115

triangle. [Figure 5.21] Parsons wrote, "a diagonal walk has been made here, with the usual widening at one point, where children can play and their elders walk about a bit with more freedom. Along the entire length of this path park benches were arranged. These benches with foot rests we have been accustomed in New York to place in the grass, thus securing more space on the walks for both grown and children."[28] Vaux retained the park's 1871 iron fence that surrounded the park, much of which is extant today. [Figure 5.22] Parsons reported to the Park commissioners in August 1888 that Christopher Street Park's improvements were complete.[29]



[Figure 5.20,5.21] Christopher Street Park: 1921, 1955, *Atlas of the Borough of Manhattan*, GW Bromley & Co.

[Figure 5.22] Christopher Street Park. Left: West 4th Street entrance, Iron gates and fence, George Segal's "Gay Liberation" installation in park; Right: Iron Fence, dated from 1871; Photos: Parks Department, City of New York.

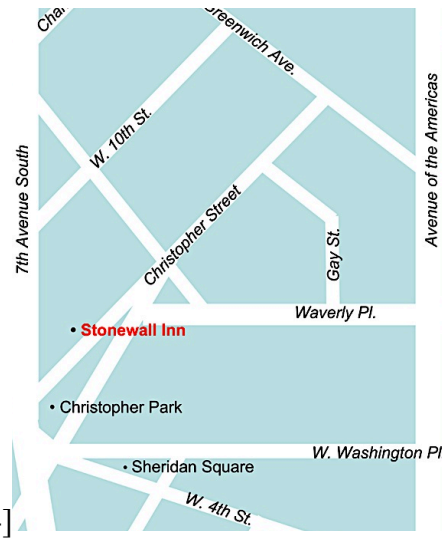
[28] Parsons, 115.

[29] *Minutes*, October 24, 1888, 1888-9, 341-2.

On Christopher Street Park's eastern end, facing west is a bronze sculpture of Union General Philip Henry Sheridan, installed to memorialize Sheridan's exemplary service during the Civil War. [Figure 5.23] Created by Joseph Polia, the seven foot, seven inch sculpture stands atop a six-foot high granite pedestal.

[Figure 5.23] "General Sheridan"
Joseph Polia, Christopher Park
Photo: Gino & Leslie Sanchez
www.sculptureadventures.com

Christopher Street Park is often associated with the beginning of the gay rights movement, for two reasons: 1) The 1969 Stonewall Inn police raid was across the street from the park, at 54 Christopher Street, and 2) the subsequent uprising and protests dubbed the "Stonewall Riots" occurred when several thousand people came to Christopher Street and the park in the days after the raid, to demand civil rights for gay people. Stonewall Inn was a popular gay bar, owned by the Genovese family, who operated it without a liquor license. The raid was allegedly an effort to curb city liquor violations, but in 1969, raids at gay bars were commonplace throughout the city, and were used to humiliate patrons and curtail their gatherings. (Figure 5.24)

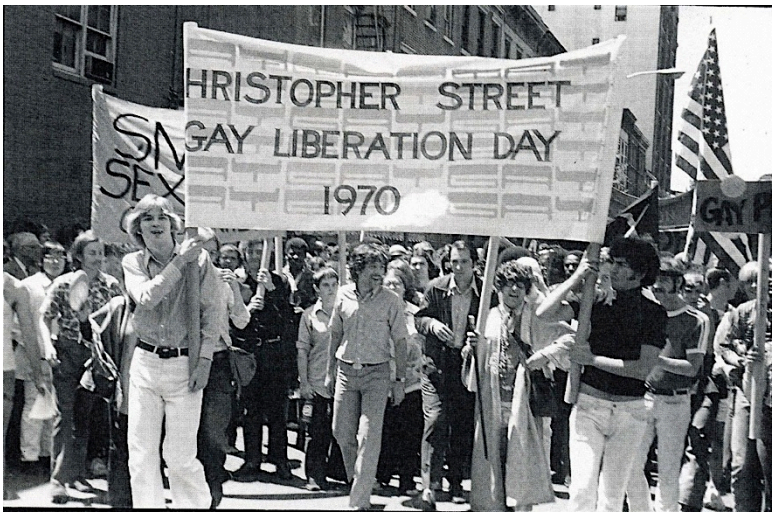


[5.24]
Stonewall Inn & Christopher Street Park
David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*, 1, 143.

Stonewall Inn, 1969

Christopher Street March 1969
Fred MacDarrah

This particular raid was different prior raids because the patrons were not cooperative with the police raid and harassment, and because the police vans in which the arrested patrons, mafia employees, and the seized alcohol were to be taken away, had not arrived when the victims were lined up to go into them.[30] The crowd outside the Inn grew quickly, protesting the arrests and seizures, calling out various phrases such as "we shall overcome" and "gay power," while making fun of the police, yelling at them, and eventually, growing more and more aggressive.[31] The protests quickly escalated forcing the police officers to wait for back up units to depart the Inn. The next two weeks were filled with protests, some of them violent, in which protesters packed into Christopher Street, the park, and other streets in the area. June 28, 1970 was the first time "Christopher Street Liberation Day" was celebrated, and with it, the Gay Pride March began in New York, starting similar marches all over the country.[32] [Figure 5.25]



[5.25] Fred MacDarrah, "Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day (June 28, 1970)," *Gay Pride: Photographs From Stonewall to Today*, Chicago: A Cappella Books, 1994.

Ironically, the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission had already designated Greenwich Village, including Christopher Street Park and the Stonewall Inn, as an

[30] David, Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*, St. Martin's Press, 2004, 142.

[31] Carter, 148.

[32] Lacey Fosburgh, "Thousands of Homosexuals Hold Protest Rally in Central Park," *New York Times*, June 29, 1970, 1.

historic district on April 29, 1969, only two months before the Stonewall Riots.[33] But the designation report only casually mentions the park: "the (Christopher) street opens on small park, to the south."[34] Because of the riots, the Stonewall Inn, Christopher Street Park, Christopher Street and seven surrounding streets involved in the protests between June 28 and July 3, 1969, were designated as a National Historic Landmark in June 1999 under the title, *Stonewall*.[35] It became the first Gay and Lesbian Site to be registered on the National Register of Historic Places.[36]

[33] *Greenwich Village Historic District: Designation Report, Volume I and II,* City of New York: Landmark Preservation Commission, 1969.

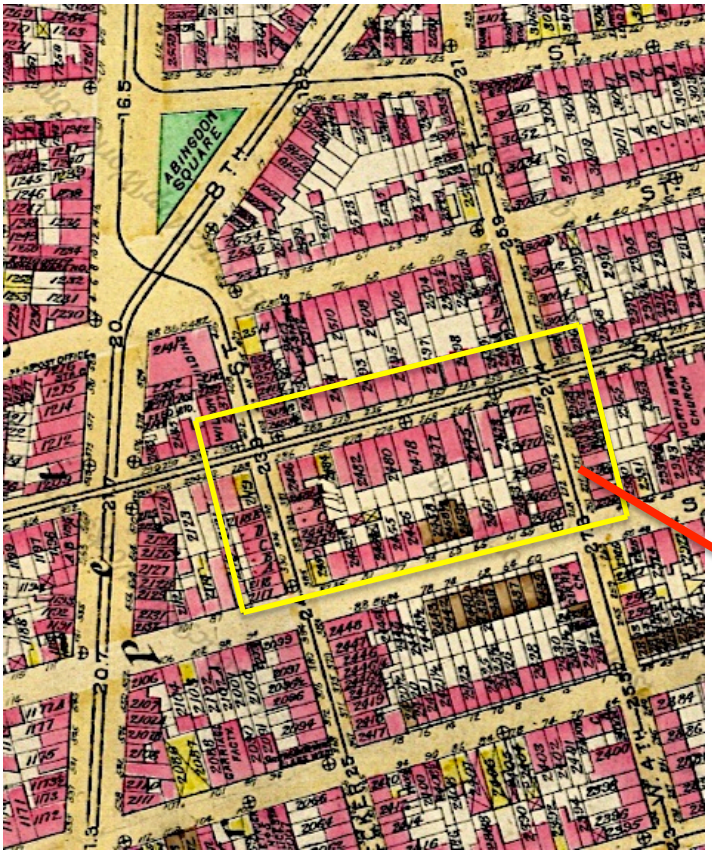
[34] *Greenwich Village Historic District: Designation Report, Volume I,* City of New York: Landmark Preservation Commission, 1969, 116.

[35] David Carter, Andrew Scott Dolkart, Gale Harris and Jay Shockly, "Stonewall," *Nation Historic Landmark Nomination: National Register of Historic Places*, January 1999.

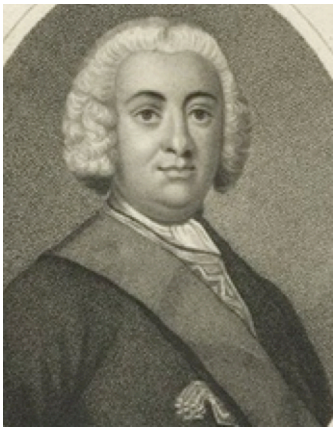
[36] Goldfarb, David, "Stonewall Gains Federal Recognition on its 30th Anniversary: First Gay/Lesbian Site to be Listed on National Register of Historic Places, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, June 26, 1999.

5.3 Abingdon Square Park

The third triangular park to be re-landscaped by Vaux was the 0.212-acre Abingdon Square Park. This park, like Christopher Street Park, was part of the Warren property. A successful British Naval officer, Warren and his wife purchased their three hundred acre farm in 1744; their property stretched from what is now Christopher Street to about West 21st Street, and from Minetta Brook to Bowery Lane (Broadway). [Figure 5.30] Their mansion was sited between West 4th, Bleecker, Charles and Perry Streets.[Figure 5.31] When the Warrens' daughter married, Warren gave fifty acres of his farm, including what is now Abingdon Square, as part of her dowry. Named after her husband, Willoughby Bertie, the Fourth Earl of Abingdon, the park is formed by the intersection of Eighth Avenue, Bleecker, Hudson and Troy (West 12th) Streets.



[Figure 5.31] Abingdon Square, *Robinson's Atlas*, 1885; Warren & his Mansion on Bleecker, Charles, West 4th, Perry Streets.



Sir Peter Warren

The Warren Mansion
Photos: New York Public Library
[Figure 5.30]

In a November 1835 Board of Aldermen meeting, the members reviewed and adopted a proposal by the Committee on Wharves and Public Lands and Places, along with the petition of A. Mactier and others, to "enclose a piece of ground as a public park" at the juncture of Hudson, Bank and Troy Streets and Eighth Avenue.[37] The Aldermen noted in their minutes that the "propriety of enclosing grounds in the different parts of the City is admitted by all as a promotion of the health and beauty of New York City. Washington Square is the closest other green spot and even though Abingdon Square will be small, it will be desirable."[38] The budget allocated by the Aldermen for the new park's construction, including the railing, was not to be more than three thousand dollars.[39] The city acquired the property on April 22, 1836, and in the same year, constructed a park and enclosed it with a cast iron fence.[40]

A notation in the 1860 Board of Aldermen's meeting minutes refers to Abingdon Square Park as being in "good order, everything looks and promises well, the railing needs painting."[41] But, the first *Annual Report* of the Public Parks Department describes Abingdon Square Park as having "old and poorly grown shrubbery" that needs to be removed, with gaps in the planting beds that require additional shrubs, while the plants overall needed thinning and the ground needed cultivation throughout the park.[42]

Abingdon Square Park had lost its sheen by 1885; the park its neighborhood no longer made any "pretensions of an aristocratic nature." The former well-to-do residents surrounding

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[37] "Document 47," *Documents of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York, Volume II*, Documents 1-134, May 1835-May 1836, New York: Charles King, 1836, 203.

[38] "Document 47," 204.

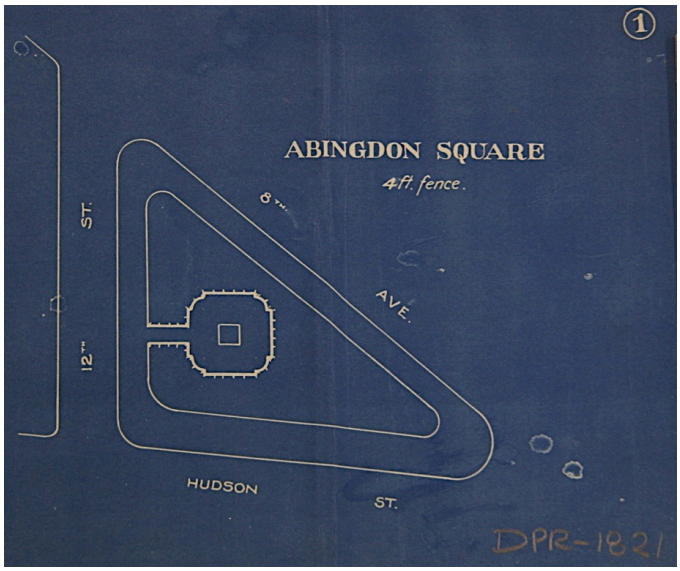
[39] "Document 47," 205.

[40] "This Day in History: Abingdon Square becomes a Public Park," *Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation*, March 2, 2012.

[41] Document 16, *Documents of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York, Volume XXVII, Part II,* Documents 15-22, July to January, New York: Edmund Jones & Co., 1860, 73.

[42] *The First Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners, Department of Public Parks, City of New York*, New York: W.C. Bryant & Co., 1871, 290.

the Square had moved north, but left their mansions behind, converted to either commercial use or boarding houses, from which they rented rooms to multiple families. The square's south side in 1885 had seen the new construction of a row of buildings designed for commercial use.[43]



[Figure 5.32] Fencing plan: Abingdon Square, unsigned and undated, Municipal Archives, City of New York. This may have been the fence Vaux and Parsons encountered at Abingdon Square in 1887.

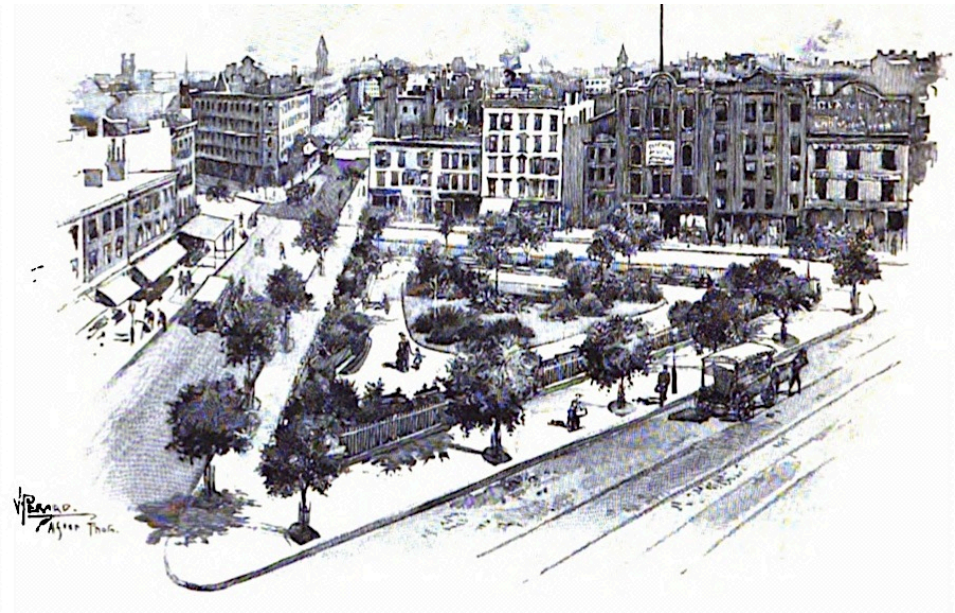
The park, still surrounded by an iron fence in 1885, had a gate with a padlock rusted locked on the inside of the gate, but no one in the neighborhood had a key or could remember having seen the gate open in years. [Figure 5.32] Over the entrance was ornate ironwork with spikes coming from it that caught on the pants of the few boys who tried to scale the fence to play in the park. Locked inside the gate were a "choice collection of old hats and shoes, battered ports and pans, stones, decaying vegetables, etc.," that people had thrown over the fence in the last several years. The park itself was near its death throes with only a few trees fighting to survive while a sickly lawn made "commendable efforts to look green." The bushes, plants and planting beds were in the same neglected condition.[44] Despite Abingdon Square's wonderful southern light, the only living beings able to use the park were birds, and even they came only a

[43] "An Odd Breathing Spot, Abingdon Square, as it was and as it now appears, once the center of fashion, but now given over to neglect and decay, *New York Times*, May 3, 1885

[44] Ibid.

few months in the year. The city kept up with its provision of man-made light though, as by 1885, they had replaced the gas lamps surrounding the square with new large electric lamps.[45]

Parson's description of their work in Abingdon Square notes that they found the park overcrowded with trees. He and Vaux thinned the trees, inserted a winding walk that ended, again, in a plaza area mid park.[46] The iron gateposts on West 12th Street's entrance may have been added by Vaux and Parsons, as they created openings in the 1836 fencing. Their landscape border and fencing plan was similar here to what they did in their other triangular parks: The parks were fenced around their borders, but each side of the triangular park had an entrance, while no openings were located at the triangle's points. [Figure 5.33]



[Figure 5.33] Abingdon Square, Samuel Parsons, "The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 112.

Vaux and Parsons planted minimal shrubs in the planting beds at Abingdon Square; Parsons was concerned that the plants would not get enough light under the tree canopy.[47] Still,

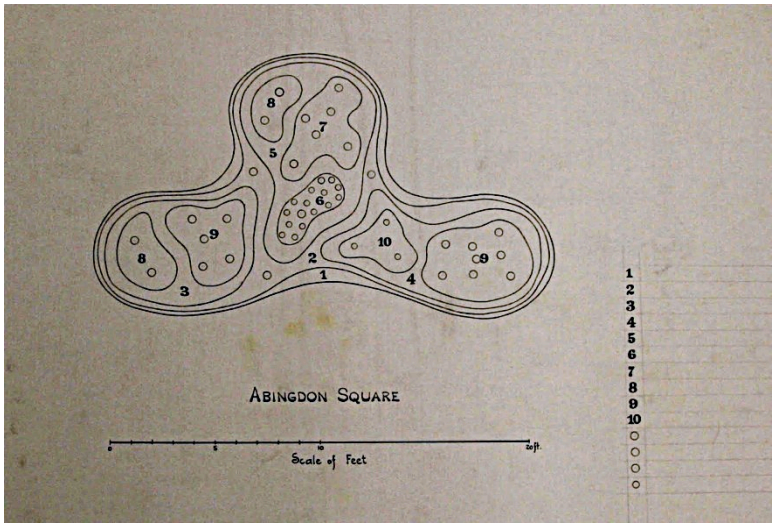
[45] Ibid.

[46] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 115.

[47] *Minutes*, October 24, 1888, 1888-9, 341-2.

[47] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 115

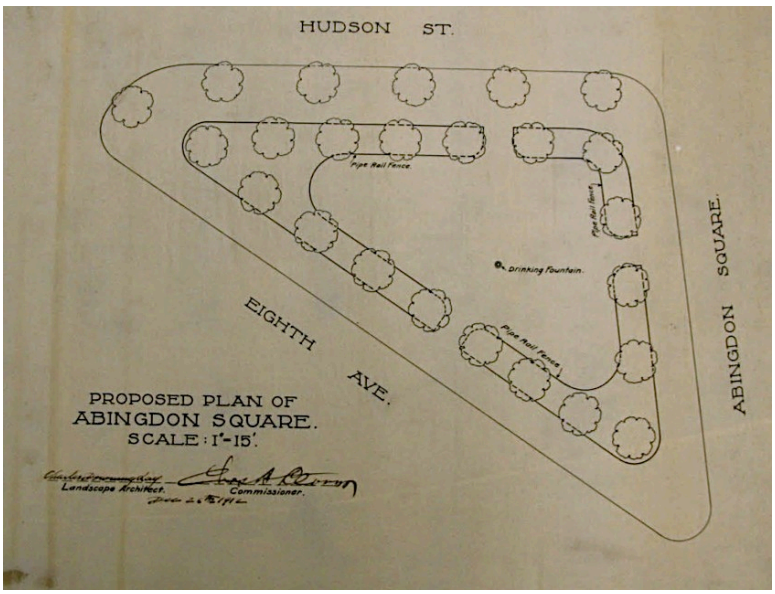
they created undulating planting beds around the park's border, filling in lawn in the remaining areas. Parson's drawing of Abingdon Square, which he included in his 1892 *Scribner's* article on "City Squares," shows Abingdon as far more spacious than it actually was. Even so, it is easy to recognize Parsons' planting plan in the center of Abingdon Square's triangular form. [Figure 5.34] Parsons and Vaux's renovation of Abingdon Square Park was complete in October 1888.[48]



[Figure 5.34] "Abingdon Square: Planting Plan", unsigned & undated, *Municipal Archives*. Strikingly similar to Samuel Parsons Jr.'s handwriting & drawing style, this is likely by his hand. Vaux would have drawn the general landscaping plan; Parsons would have drawn this planting plan, for Abingdon Square Park's center planting bed.

In 1912, Parks Landscape Architect Charles Downing Lay designed another plan for the park, though there is no indication in the Parks Department notes that his plan was implemented. [Figure 5.35] His plan called for a double fence on the outside and inside of his planting beds, and removed Vaux and Parsons' planting beds in the center of the park. In addition, he planned a single row of six trees to line the sidewalk on Hudson Street, perhaps to protect the park from the noise of the busy street.

[48] *Minutes*, October 24, 1888, 1888-9, 341-2.



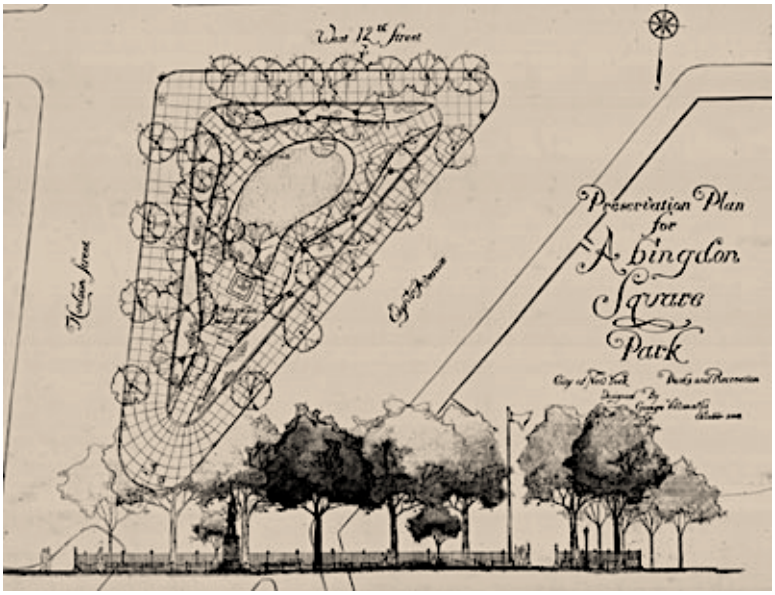
[Figure 5.35] *Proposed Plan: Abingdon Square*, Charles D. Lay, 1912, Municipal Archives, City Of New York.

In October 1921, ex-governor Alfred E. Smith and Mayor John Hylan led twenty thousand spectators in a march south from 28th Street to Abingdon Square for the unveiling of its new bronze Doughboy sculpture.[49] Designed by Philip Martiny, the twenty-foot high sculpture commemorates World War I veterans with a soldier "standing in repulse attack, his body partly shielded by his colors, which he clutches with his left hand." [Figure 5.36] At the base of the monument is a list of service men of the district and the subscribers to the fund for the monuments creation.[50] In 1993, the Parks Department restored Martiny's sculpture.[51]

[Figure 5.36] Philip Martiny, "Abingdon Square Doughboy, 1921" Abingdon Square Alliance.org

[49] "Greenwich Village Honors War Dead; Ex-Governor Smith Makes Presentation, *New York Times*, Oct 31, 1921.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Parks Department, City of New York, http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/abingdonsquare/monuments/1942

The neighborhood surrounding Abingdon Square today is a mixed-use community with both commercial and residential space. There is a strong support for the park and its maintenance in the neighborhood; in 2003, residents formed the Abingdon Square Alliance, a proactive group who intend to keep their park well cared for. In 2002, Parks Department landscape architect George Vellonakis created a new landscape plan for the once again deteriorated Abingdon Square Park; his $760,000 plan was generous and included a fountain, replacing asphalt with grass, bluestone walkways, new lighting and historic-style benches. The sculpture was to be moved to just outside the park's fence, where Vellonakis suggested it could function as a beacon for cars and pedestrians.[52] [Figure 5.37]



[Figure 5.37] George Vellonakis, "Preservation Plan: Abingdon Square Park," New York Department of Parks

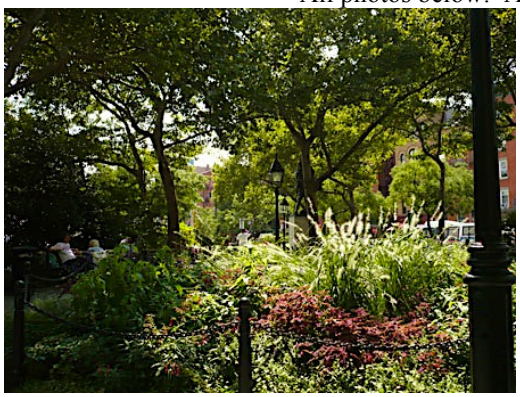
Some neighborhood residents, especially local nursing home residents who navigate wheelchairs, objected to the fountain and increased grass, as they thought their usable space would decrease and obstacles to movement increase. Some called his idea the "denigration of a square" while others were offended by his proposal to move the statue out of the park, and some

[52] Tara Bahrampour, "Abingdon Square Park: A Triangle in Controversy," *New York Times*, February 24, 2002.

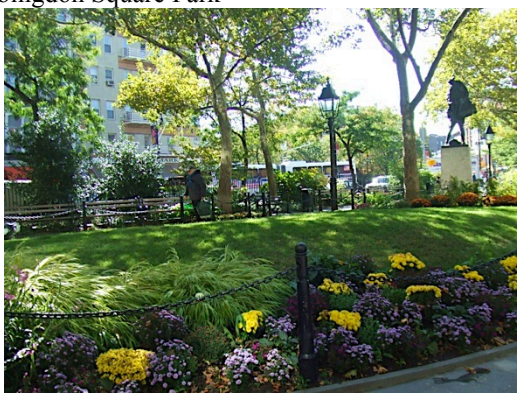
[52] Kelly Crow, "Neighborhood Report: West Village, Abingdon Square Park- Small Site, Never-Ending Debate," New York Times, December 1, 2002

were outraged that he intended to cut into the park's original historic fence. After lengthy negotiations, the neighborhood and the Parks Department agreed on a park with bluestone paving and lawn that kept the sculpture within the park. Unlike Vaux's handling of a triangle, Vellonakis' park entrances are at the triangle's points; his plan did include undulating planting beds and, as Vaux used in his larger small parks, a kidney shaped lawn. The original cast iron fence, restored by Allen Metals, was returned to Abingdon Square in 2004. [Figure 5.38]

All photos below: Abingdon Square Park



Jonsobel.com



Kidney shaped lawn, 2008: outsidersnyc.blogspot.com

Spring: by Smithratliff.com

Hydrangeas 2012, JefferyMcCullough.blogspot.com

[Figure 5.38] Original Cast Iron Fence, 2004
AllenMetals.com

Shelly Garden
www3.pictures.zimbio.com

Restored Cast Iron Finial 2004
AllenMetals.com

5.4 Jackson Square

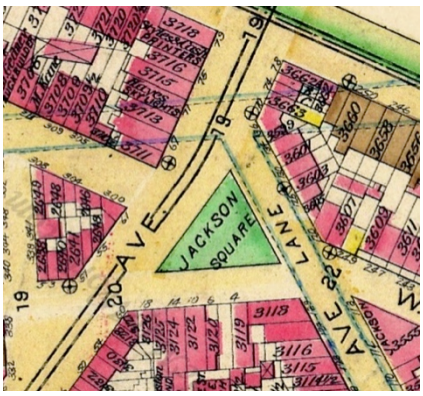
Jackson Square Park, the fourth small pre-existing park re-landscaped by Vaux with funds from the Small Parks Act, is a 0.227-acre triangular shaped park, formed in the 1820s by an irregular junction of streets. On the square's southeastern tip is the meeting of Eighth Avenue and Horatio Street. On the Square's southwestern tip, Horatio Street meets the connection between Greenwich Lane and Greenwich Avenue (now, Greenwich Avenue). At its northern tip, Eighth Avenue met Greenwich Lane (now Greenwich Avenue). [Figure 5.41]

[Figure 5.41] "Jackson Square Park Site," Bridges, William, *Island of Manhattan, laid out by commissioners appointed by Legislature on April 3, 1807*, New York, 1811, courtesy: Library of Congress.

It is unclear exactly when Jackson Square became a public park. In a parks report, the Parks Department claims that the site was acquired in 1826. This may well have been as a result of street manipulations and takings that were recorded in the Common Council's January 30, 1826 *Minutes,* as it would have been a leftover unusable parcel.[53] There is very little recorded about this little public square. Historic maps tell most of the story, as no original landscape plans or drawings for Jackson Square Park survive. [Figure 5.42] The naming of Jackson Square may

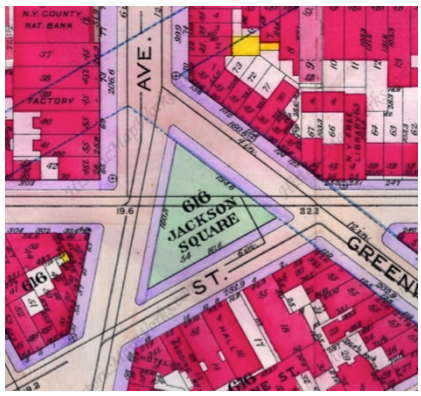
[53] *Minutes of the Common Council, Volume 15,* 30 January 1826, 183.

have coincided with the election of Andrew Jackson to the Presidency of the United States.



[Figure 5.42] Jackson Square, 1885
Robinson's Atlas, Plate 10.

Jackson Square, 1891,
G.W. Bromley, Plate 10.



Jackson Square, 1909, revised 1915.
G.W. Bromley

A travel diary written by a young man, John Alonzo Stuart, who was enlisted in the United States Navy during the Civil War, mentions his two-day leave from his ship in New York City. His entry on Tuesday, December 20, 1864, records his experiences in the city, including his walk past the frozen flowers in Jackson Square:

> We have had our 48 hours of liberty ashore, commencing Sunday. I spent each day on the shore, returning to the ship at sundown to spend the night, reporting with a request to be allowed to finish my liberty next day. I visited the famous Custom House and the no less famous market, strolled through some of the best streets, and gathered some of the Spanish moss that gives such a ghostly appearance to the double line of trees in the middle of Canal Street. Oleanders growing in the open ground in front of the houses had been badly frosted during the late northers. Flowers and shrubs in Jackson Square Park or garden were in a sad state from the freezes.[54]

Jackson Square is mentioned again in 1871, in the *Report of the New York Meteorological Observatory of the Department of Parks.* In their report, they mention Jackson Square twice. The first time was to give a report of amounts paid for materials and labor for improvements in the park.[55] The second report was a further accounting of material and their expense used in the park's refurbishment. Included were foundation masonry, railings, lampposts

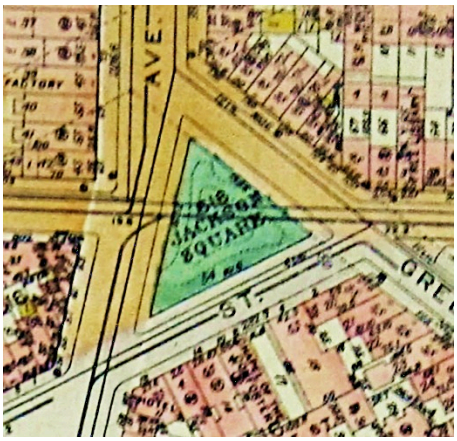
[54] Tuesday, December 20, 1864 in Joseph Alonzo Stuart, *My Roving Life: a Diary of Travels and Adventures by Sea and Land, During Peace and War, Volume 2, in the US Navy through the rebellion and after, auburn, CA, 1896,* 23.

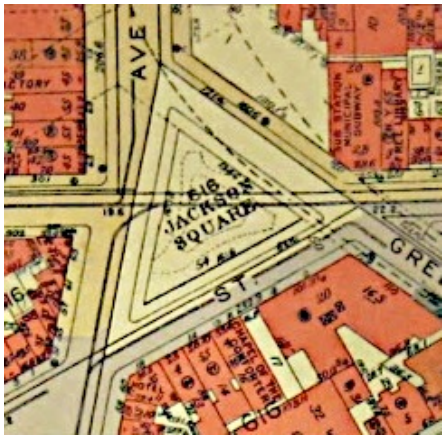
[55] *Report of the New York Meteorological Observatory of the Department of Parks*, New York: William C. Bryant, 1871, 44.

and the grading of walkways. Given the newly formed Department of Public Parks, these list likely describe a park refurbishment.[56]

Stuart's *Diary* indicate that Jackson square was functioning as a park, with flowers, at least seven years earlier, but because the 1871 lists of supplies and labor costs are relatively high, they may indicate that by 1871, Jackson Square Park was in a very deteriorated condition.

In 1887, when Vaux and Parson's re-landscaped this park, Parson's description resembles that of Abingdon Square, in that they put a large, colorful planting bed in the center of the park, flanked by trees and shrubs, with some lawn plantings along the borders of the park. Early historical maps do not detail any layout in the park, but later maps, from 1921 and 1955, suggest that in this park, Vaux created only two access points, instead of three, via Eighth Avenue and Greenwich Avenue. [Figure 5.43]





[Figure 5.43] Jackson Square, G.W. Bromley, 1921 Jackson Square, G. W. Bromley, 1955

Parson's description in his 1892 *Scribner's* article, suggests a park full of colorful flowers and surrounded by asphalt paths:

> ….in Jackson Square, we made the cut diagonally, across the long narrow park, leaving a comparatively large lawn space on one side. In Jackson square, the central space was made a great bouquet of brilliant flowers and leaves, in the middle musas and cannas, and round them brilliant glowing acalyphas, coleuses, and geraniums. The effect of this park was extremely decorative, with the central showy bedding flanked and nested as it were

[56] *Report of the New York Meteorological*, 242.

> among masses of trees and shrubs. The neighborhood of this park is respectable but populous, and it is wonderful on a warm evening to see the dense masses of people that crowd the park benches and smooth asphalt walks.[57]

The Parks Department's *Annual Report* of 1888 notes Parson's comments on this park. On September 5, 1888, he reported that the park's existing gas lamps had been replaced with all new electric lamps, and that he and Vaux had completed their work in Jackson Square Park.[58]

In the 1930s, Jackson Square Park went through another renovation. This time, a wading pool was added and new benches were installed. A 1935 photo does not include a wading pool, so its construction must have occurred post-1935. Note in the photo that the Eighth Avenue entrance no longer exists, and the park looks barren. Where have the bountiful trees and flowers of Vaux and Parsons gone? The 1930s renovation included planting twenty-four pin oak trees on the park's perimeter; eventually they would provide a shade canopy. [Figure 5.44]

[Figure 5.44] Max Ulrich, "Bird's eye view from 8th Ave.-Jackson Square Park, New York, September 13, 1934.

In 1971, the wading pool was converted to "a spray thing and a play thing" designed by Anita Margrill as a portable "water sculpture." By 1991, members of the community placed a lock on the park's gates. The park had been renovated once again, giving it new greenery, restoration of the park's original iron fencing with three entrances to the park, one in the middle

[57] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 115

[58] *Minutes of the Parks Board*, September 5, 1888, Department of Public Parks, City of New York, 1888-89, 224 & 226.

of each side of the triangle, restoration of its benches, and the introduction of a new cast iron, 3-tiered fountain on a granite base, designed to look historic. The fountain took the place of the water sculpture in the park, but was intended to evoke, by its design, the 19th century origin of the park. There is no fountain recorded in Jackson Square Park before the 1991 installation. The neighborhood's choice to padlock the park's gate closed at night was not to prevent vandalism, but to bar the homeless from camping in the park at night. Not unlike many other parks in New York City, this park too has a support group that oversees the park and makes sure that it stays in good condition; the Jackson Square Alliance was founded in 2008.

Jackson Square Park: Arial View, 2011, BJeffway, flickr.com

http://i658.photobucket.com

Jackson Square Park

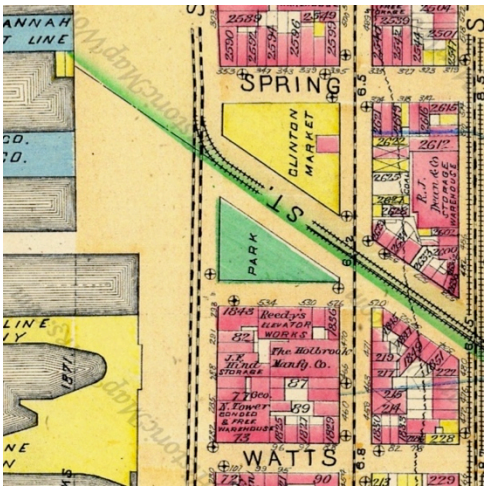
Cast iron urn planter, B Jeffway, 2011, flickr.com

Jackson Square Alliance, Historic Fence and Finial.

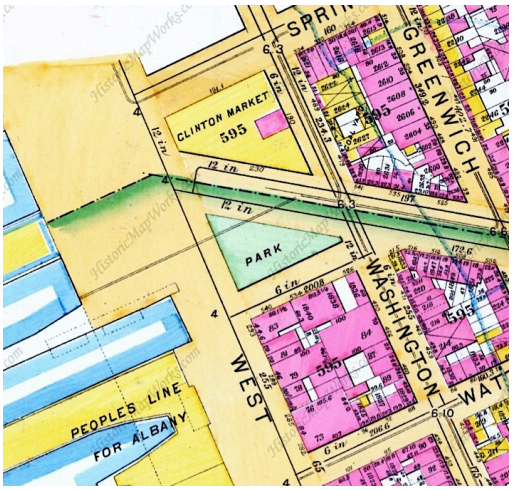
5.5 Canal Street Park

The largest of the pre-existing small parks re-landscaped by Vaux was Canal Street Park. At 0.318 acres, it is nearly a third of an acre. Located practically next to the North River (the Hudson), on Canal Street, it easy to miss this park. Now, it is near the Holland Tunnel entrance, so it is mostly only neighborhood residents who use the park.

Canal Street Park was established in 1833, but was occupied by the Clinton Market, which spread south from the northern east corner of Canal and West Streets. [Figure 5.50, 5.51]



[Figure 5.5] "Canal Park," *Robinson's Atlas*, 1885, Plate 3



[Figure 5.51] "Canal Park," Atlas of the Borough of Manhattan, G. W. Bromley & Co, 1891, Plate 4.

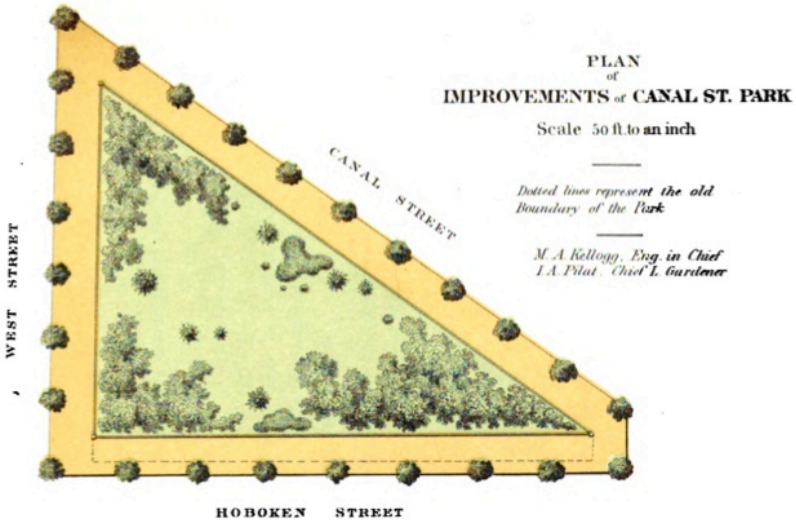
In 1865, the Board of Aldermen acted to remove the market from the park space.

> Report of Committee on Lands and Places, in favor of concurring with the Board of Aldermen in adopting resolution as follows: Resolved, that the square bounded by Hoboken, Canal, West and Washington Streets, heretofore occupied by the Clinton Country Market, be and is hereby and hereafter appropriated as a public square." [59]

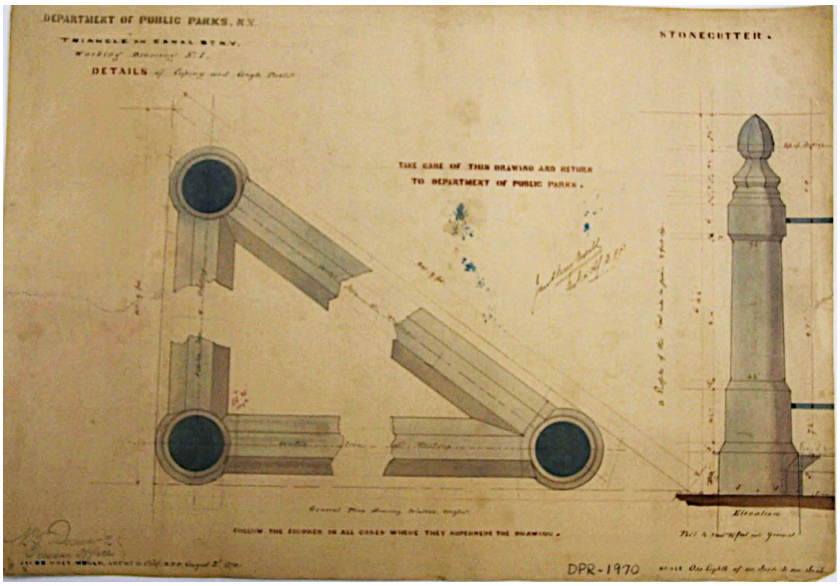
By 1871, the market on Canal Street Park's site was razed; in its place, a lovely park was designed by Park's Chief Engineer M.A. Kellogg and Chief Gardener Ignatz Pilat. [Figure 5.52] Also in 1871, Jacob Wrey Mould, the Chief Architect for the Parks Department, designed corner posts and coping for the park's fence. [Figure 5.53] Though those posts are no longer on the

[59] "City Government; Official Board of Councilmen," *New York Times*, July 26, 1865.

Canal Street property, they may have been the model for corner posts resembling these in Jackson Square Park.



[Figure 5.52] M.A. Kellogg and I.A. Pilat, Plan of Improvements of Canal Street Park, 1871.



[Figure 5.53] "Triangle on Canal Street: Working Drawing No. 1, Details: Coping & Angle Posts, General Plan showing Relative Angles," Signed, Jacob Wrey Mould, Architect in Chief, Department Public Parks, NY, August 2, 1870, Municipal Archives, New York City.

[Figure 5.54] Jackson Square Park Corner Posts http://farm3.staticflickr.com/

When Vaux re-landscaped Canal Street Park in 1887, he created two openings in the park's fence, just as he did in Jackson Square Park, so that the park could be entered on either

West Street or Canal Street. He and Parsons planted trees all along the perimeter of the park, so that they might also eventually offer the park a shade canopy.

Parson's wrote that "at Canal Street Park the length of the main lawn space was such as to secure something in the nature of a vista, and with this was associated the same jewel-like effect of bedding and the same charm of trees and shrubs."[60] Their curving walkway bent around the lawn space, just as the path widened for gathering, then curved again, narrowing itself until it met the opposite exit. The area allocated to lawn was fairly large in the northern section of the park, but then it was in turn, framed with plantings and park benches. [Figure 5.55]

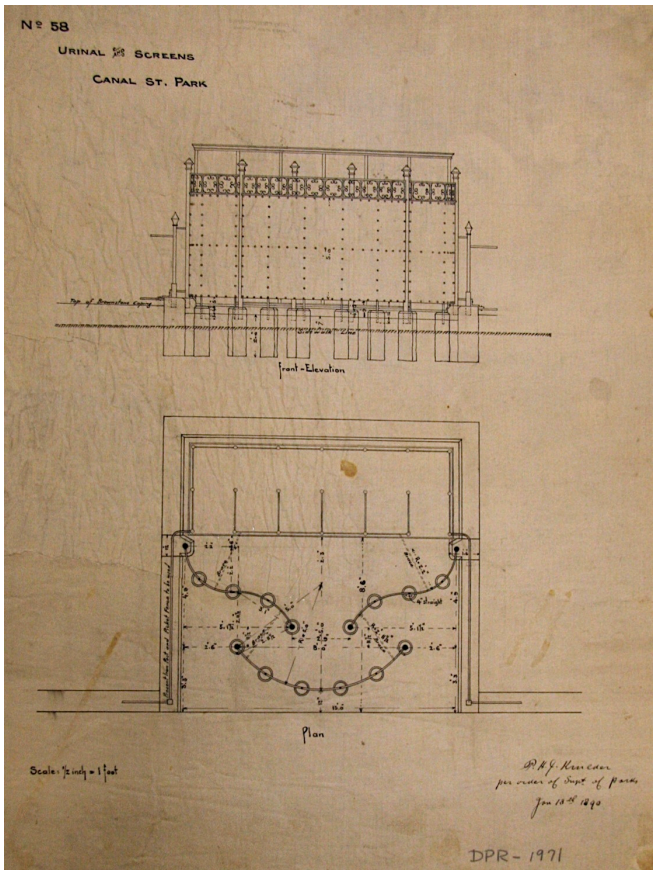
Canal Street Park, New York.

[Figure 5.55] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "Canal Street Park: The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 111.

Two years after the Vaux's design was implemented in the park, Parsons had R.H.J. Kuneder create a cast iron urinal screen for Canal Street Park. [Figure 5.56] In Parsons' drawing

[60] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "The Evolution of a City Square," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1892, 115.

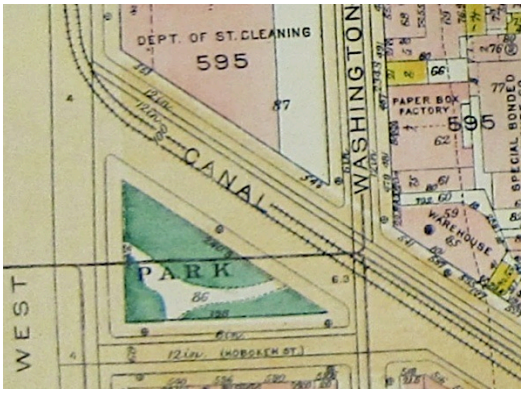
of Canal Street Park for his *Scribner's* article [Figure 5.55], the urinal appears to be in the southeast corner of the park, facing the street (in the drawing, it is on the upper left hand corner).



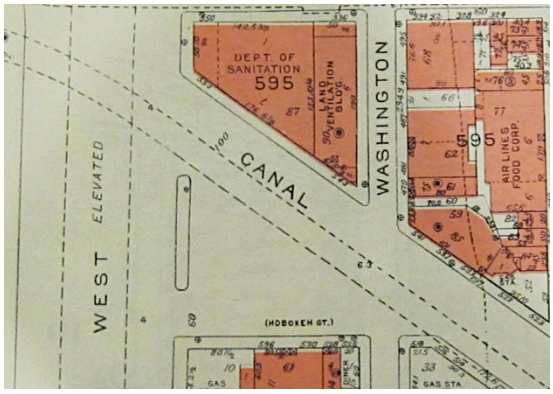
[Figure 5.56] *No. 58: Elevation & Plan, Urinal & Screens, Canal St. Park*, per order of the Supt of Parks, R.H.J. Kuneder, January 18, 1890.

By 1921 Vaux's plan appeared in historic maps. One map shows three entrances to the park. [Figure 5.57] By the early 1920s, the park itself was starting to disappear from the maps. [Figure 5.58] The property across the street from the park had become the Department of Sanitation. When the digging for the Holland Tunnel began in 1921, Sanitation Department employees began parking their trucks *in* the park.[61] After several years of parking in the park, the Department of Sanitation came to think of the old park grounds as belonging to their department, rather than a park that should be rehabilitated and returned to the people of the neighborhood.

[61] Stewart, Barbara, "Following Up: Reclaimed Park Due in February 2002," *New York Times*, November 25, 2001.



[Figure 5.57] "Canal Park," *Atlas, Borough of Manhattan,* G. W. Bromley & Co, NY, 1921



[Figure 5.58] "Canal Park," (missing) *Atlas, Borough of Manhattan*, G. W. Bromley & Co., 1955

Many years passed and it seemed that the park was gone forever, but in 1998, a group of residents from the Canal Street neighborhood verified, by looking at historic maps and old records, that their neighborhood park once existed. Given that had been landscaped by Calvert Vaux and Samuel Parsons, Jr., it had been a park with a very prestigious pedigree. The neighbors sued the State, and the State agreed to pay for the historic park's reconstruction.[62] Landscape Architect Allen Shaw designed the new park based on Vaux and Parsons' plans. [Figure 5.59] The new $2.7 million park was completed and opened in December 2005.[63]

[Figure 5.59] Allen Shaw, Canal Park Landscape Plane, 2002.

[62] Stewart, Barbara, "Unearthing a Small Park Buried Since 1921, *New York Times,* June 26, 2000.

[63] Williams, Timothy, "An Oasis Beckons in a Spot Once Used by Trash Trucks," *New York Times*, 2005.

5.6 Conclusion

The re-landscaping of these five triangular parks was included in this thesis because the funds expended for the work were for the first project that the Small Parks Act produced. The goal of the law was to create small parks in poor, densely populated neighborhoods. These five parks already existed before the law was passed, but they were closed to anyone but the birds flying over them, and all five parks were in various stages of deterioration, none of them usable. At Hewitt's directive, Vaux and Parson's re-landscaped these parks and got them back open and functioning within their respective neighborhoods, all of which were poor and densely populated. So, although they were not new parks, Hewitt, Vaux and Parsons followed the spirit of the law by making these five triangular parks accessible and welcoming once again.

Chapter 6: The Vaux Parks

Mulberry Bend Park 1897

East River Park 1902

6.1 Mulberry Bend Park

After the passage of Small Parks Act, Commissioners of the Board of Street Opening and Improvement set their sights first on Block 165 as a site for a new small park. The plan for the 2.75-acre Mulberry Bend Park would be Calvert Vaux's final landscape design; "when he signed the plan being then ill in bed, he laid down the pen with a happy sigh and said, 'in that I feel I have put the best work I have to give, and it is my best."[1] When Mulberry Bend Park opened officially on June 15, 1897 as the first park born of the Small Parks Act, John Howard and Samuel Cauldwell's imposing open-air pavilion complimented Vaux's curvilinear pathways and tree lined borders, bringing light, air and better health to the neighborhood's poor.[2] [Figure 6.10]

[Figure 6.10] Mulberry Bend Park, New York, Detroit Publishing Company, 1905, Library of Congress (Arrow indicates Howard & Cauldwell pavilion at north end of the park)

[1] Vaux's daughter, as quoted in *Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia & Register of Important Events of the Year 1895*, NY: D. Appleton & Co., 1896, 596.

[2] "Mulberry Park Opened," *New York Times*, June 16, 1897; the park opened for use in 1896, but because the pavilion was not completed until 1897, the park's formal opening was pushed back.

Perhaps the most notorious of all the slums that the small parks advocates hoped to replace, Mulberry Bend became well known with the photojournalism of Jacob Riis. His 1890 book, *How the Other Half Lives,* shocked New Yorkers, as he had intend it to, with its images of crowded tenements and poverty in the Bend; Riis' book and his earlier articles and photographs documenting the lives of the poor and their living conditions in the city's poorest areas were instrumental in bringing middle and upper class focus onto the plight of the city's poor. After 1890, the neighborhood was widely regarded as a dangerous slum filled with crime, filth, disease and overcrowded tenements.[3] The Tenement Commissions, however, had long been aware of the Bend's sub-standard living conditions, myriad building violations and predatory landlords.

Though Vaux died in November 1895, one and a half years before this park opened, he was the Parks Department's Landscape Architect at the time this property was being acquired; his design was submitted and accepted by the Parks Commissioners on June 19, 1895.[4] Aware that Mulberry Bend would serve as a reform park, bringing a healthier existence to the poor who lived near it, Vaux wanted the park plan to reflect his own values in park design. He considered the urban park a space in which one could leave the world outside and be uplifted by the experience of being in the park. Mulberry Bend's scheme was a mini-pleasure ground, in that all of its paths were curvilinear, offering different perspectives of the park to the viewer as he moved along its paths. In order to accommodate both promenading adults and playing children, the sidewalks were specified at a minimum width of eighteen feet. Benches lined the walkways, offering a place to sit, read or talk, but they also served as a barrier to the greens they backed up against, as lawns were off-limits to pedestrians. The perimeters of the greenswards were planted with elm and linden trees, while the park's borders were planted with maple trees, providing a

[3] Elizabeth Barlow, "New York: A Once and Future Arcadia," *New York Magazine,* November 29, 1971, 53.

[4] *Minutes and Documents of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Public Parks, for the Year Ending, April 30, 1895*, New York: Martin B. Brown, 1896, 48.

natural shield within the park from the city sounds and sights.[5]

Following approval of Vaux's park plan by the Parks Department's commissioners, John Galen Howard and Samuel Milbank Cauldwell were invited to prepare a plan for the park's pavilion.[6] Though Vaux was himself both an architect and a landscape architect of considerable note, he did not design any of the small parks' buildings. After his death, his devoted partner and friend, Superintendent of Parks Samuel Parsons, carefully implemented Vaux's plans into the two parks that Vaux had designed: Mulberry Bend and East River (now Carl Schurz) Parks.

6.11 The Pavilion

Howard & Cauldwell were the architects of the Mulberry Bend pavilion. It was, and still is, a symmetrical single-story open-air raised limestone structure with a cross-gabled slate roof. [Figure 6.110] Designed at a time when the city beautiful movement was becoming increasingly more popular following the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, this pavilion is an interesting interpretation of a temple. Most of the parks from the Small Parks Act would have pavilions built in them, but the other parks' pavilions were closer to a Romanized temple with raised plinths, arched colonnades and monumental proportions. Here, the open-air component of Howard & Cauldwell's pavilion is raised up from street level, giving this pavilion too, a temple-like feel. Raising the first floor would benefit the pavilion in two ways: first, those standing in the pavilion would have a glorious view over the park, and second, the raised basement and its windows brought natural light to the comfort stations located within the basement.

The key design elements of the pavilion are the arches centered on each of the pavilion's four façades; the front and rear arches are flanked by columns creating a raised open-air room.

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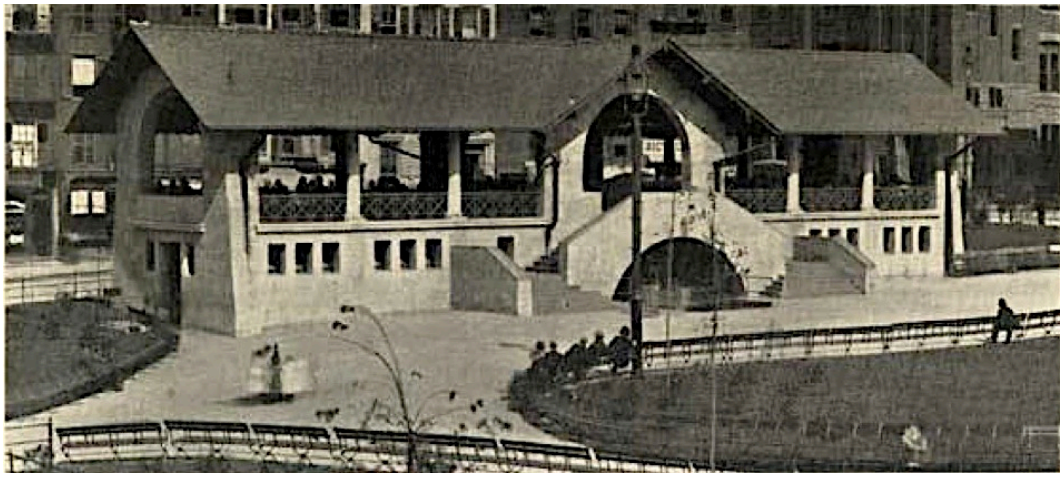
[5] Francis R. Kowsky, *Country, Park & City: The Architecture & Life of Calvert Vaux,* NY: Oxford University Press, 2003, 308-9.

[6] Kowsky, 309.

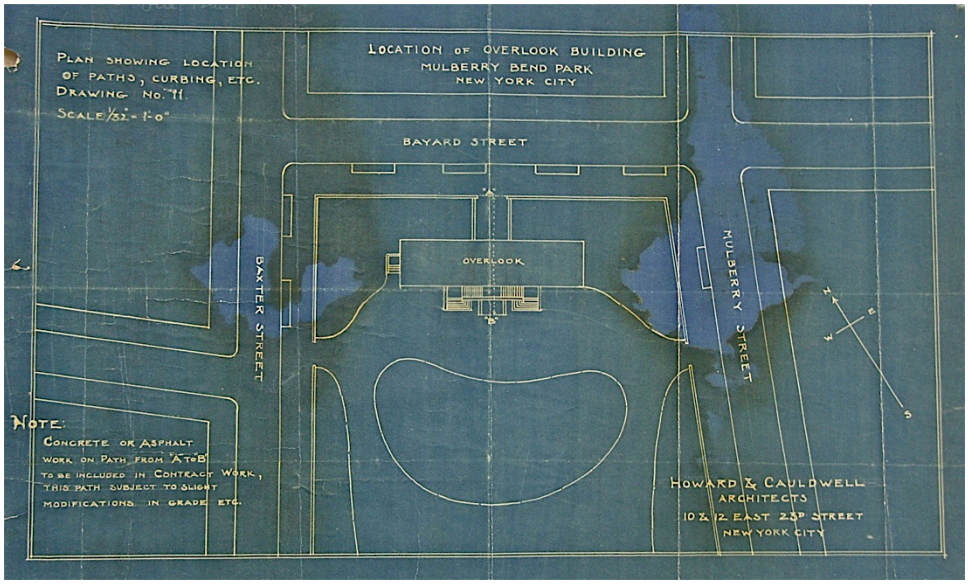
On the basement level, a wide and centered segmental arch serves as a frame for stairs leading on either side of it up to the main floor; small, unglazed rectangular windows, in turn, flank the stairs offering evenly spaced natural light to the rooms under the pavilion. Inside the basement the comfort station space, it is evenly distributed between boys and girls. Between them, accessible only under the segmental arch, is a small storage area located centrally under the front stairs. Entrance to the upper level is only from inside the park via the pavilion's southern elevation, while entrances to the lower level comfort stations are on the pavilion's east and west elevations. Waist-high decorative iron fencing runs the length of the pavilion's main floor, in its north and south elevations, to link its columns while providing safety for those using the space. The pavilion's exposed framed interior lends the pavilion a rusticated cabin-like ambiance; its timber beams support the weight of the heavy cross-gabled slate roof overhead. Consequently, the Mulberry Bend Park pavilion lacks the pretentiousness of temple typologies found in the city's other small parks of this era.



[Figure 6.110] "Park Shelter, Mulberry Bend Park,"
Howard & Cauldwell, *Inland Architect & News Record*, 31; 6, July 1898

Howard & Cauldwell's site plan shows the pavilion sited on the park's northernmost border, along Bayard Street; the upstairs of their pavilion was to be used as either an outlook or as a grandstand or platform from which to entertain. Their plan created a building that could be

seen from throughout the park and the adjoining neighborhood, and from which, the parks and its surroundings could be viewed. Siting the pavilion as the design team did, may have contributed to its preservation; later modifications of the park in playgrounds and outdoor gymnasiums were made without the modification or removal of the pavilion. [Figure 6.111]



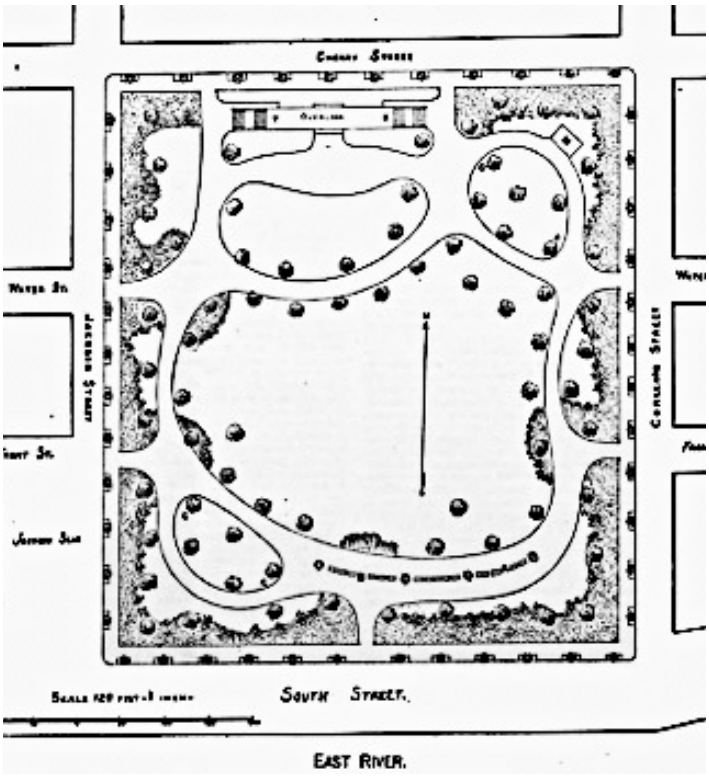
[Figure 6.111] *Site Plan: Pavilion, Mulberry Bend Park,* Howard & Cauldwell, Archives, Department of Records, City of New York, c. 1896

Vaux, Howard & Cauldwell had worked together on another park project prior to their collaboration on Mulberry Bend Park. Corlears Hook Park on the Lower East Side's East River waterfront was created and funded under the provisions of a law passed in 1884, prior to the Small Parks Act. In an 1894 *Garden and Forest* article, editor William Stiles published and discussed Vaux's plan for Corlears Hook Park provides an intimate understanding of Vaux's work.[7] A comparison of the two Vaux plans with Stiles commentary produces commonalities between the two plans. [Figure 6.112, 6.113]

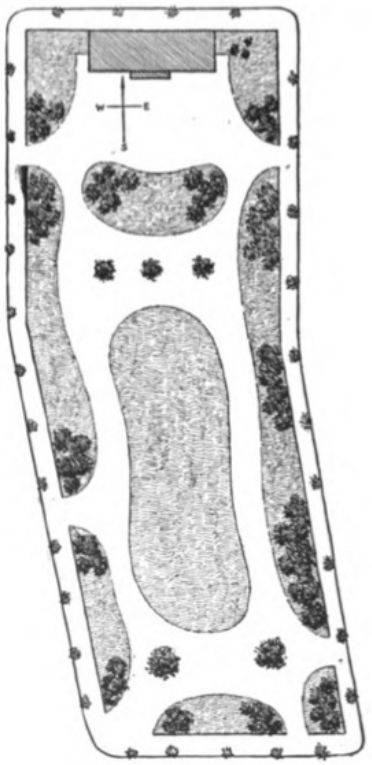
Stiles wrote that "moderately direct walks" from east to west or north to south took the place of city's street lines, suggesting that Vaux's curvilinear paths offered a softened experience

[7] William Stiles, "Corlears Hook Park," *Garden & Forest*, Oct. 24, 1894, 422-3.

against the city's harsh grid of straight streets meeting the parks' borders. Vaux's design offered a smooth transition from park to street, as his curvilinear paths connected the park visitor to the adjoining cross streets, but without presenting a straight thoroughfare, he temporarily interrupted the continuation of the grid. At eighteen feet, the walkways in both parks were wide; Vaux's intention was to allow crowds to promenade and visit; this was, after all, a very populated neighborhood in the city. Stiles pointed out that at the path's broadest points, extra benches and additional trees were planned to provide shaded locations for summer relaxation.[8]



[Figure 6.112] Vaux's Plan: Corlears Hook Park
Stiles, William, *Garden & Forest*, Oct. 24, 1894 427.



[Figure 6.113] Vaux's Plan: Mulberry Bend Park
Samuel Parsons' drawing in, *How to Plan the Home Grounds*, New York: Doubleday & McClure, 1901, 236

Both parks were allocated large swaths of centrally located greenswards left mostly unadorned, except for shade trees, such as lindens and elms, planted at the edges of the greenswards. Several smaller lawn areas filled in the irregular, yet round-edged spaces between

[8] Stiles, 422-3.

the walking paths. The parks' perimeters were framed with undulating planting beds. A final screen between the city and the park was created with a border of leafy maple trees along the curb line; these were sited "about fifty feet apart, and they were arranged … so that there was no tree at either of the exterior angles… trees at such angles are much more liable to injury by horses and wagons when turning corners sharply than at any other point.[9]

Not everyone cared for this style of park design. [Figure 6.114] Charles Downing Lay, the Parks Department's Landscape Architect after Samuel Parsons, 1911-1913, wrote an assessment of Vaux's Mulberry Bend Park plan:

> It was laid out in the drunken sailor system, as the French would say…aimlessly winding paths divide the space into sausage or kidney shaped lawns… In order to get some sort of suggestion of a park in grass and trees the lawns have to be surrounded by 6-foot fences. From the outside, one sees only fence. When on a walk, one feels as if in a cage looking out on the grassy lawn, which one cannot reach.[10]

[Figure 6.114] Mulberry Bend Park, G.W. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of New York* 1899

Samuel Parsons was largely responsible for the fences in the small parks; his goal was to protect the park elements, but his fences denied the park attendees the experience of sitting, playing or picnicking on a lawn. He later wrote that Olmsted, Vaux and he objected to buildings in parks, and in general, viewed their existance as "attacks" on the park.[11] He feared that the inclusion of structures for alternate fuctions within a park would increase the park's foot traffic and result in the destruction of the park's elements.

[9] William Stiles, "Corlears Hook Park," *Garden & Forest*, Oct. 24, 1894, 422-3.
[10] Charles Downing Lay, "Lesser New York Parks," *New York Times,* March 16, 1924.
[11] Samuel Parsons, "Small City Parks," *Transactions of American Society of Landscape Architects, 1899-1908,* 79.

6.12 Site History

Mulberry Bend was not always a notorious slum; the area was once populated with farms, some of which used the fresh water from the Collect Pond only a few blocks west of the Bend. [Figure 6.120] Tanneries and other businesses set up their shops near the water too; by 1808, the pond was so polluted, it was filled in with rubble, and in 1811, streets were laid out on top of what was once the Collect Pond.[12] Because the landfill had not been well engineered, many of the middle class homes built on the new streets started to sink, as methane gas seeped from the buried and decaying material under the surface causing the ground to give way in places. The area became a wet, muddy, polluted environment, ripe for mosquito breeding. Cholera, typhoid and yellow fever outbreaks were common and deadly in 1800s New York. Residents of the "Bend," living densely with no access to healthcare were often hard hit. By the 1820s, most middle and upper class families had moved north to unpolluted ground; in turn, they leased their former homes as tenements to the poor.

[Figure 6.120] *Sanitary & Topographical Map of the City & Island of New York*, 1875, Egbert L. Viele, in Steven Kurutz, "When There Was Water Everywhere," *New York Times*, June 11, 2006 (Mulberry Bend Park outlined)

By the mid-1800s, immigration to New York was rising rapidly, but the people who

[12] Elizabeth Barlow, "New York: A Once and Future Arcadia," *New York Magazine,* November 29, 1971, 50-56.

settled in the Bend were the poorest of all. Mulberry Bend Park's block, on its southwest corner, borders what was once known as the "Five Points," the notorious gang and crime filled meeting of five block corners; Worth (formerly Anthony), Park (formerly Cross) and Baxter (formerly Orange) Streets created the five "point" intersection. [Figure 6.121, 6.122] Though it would eventually become the New York County Courthouse site, in the 1880s, the Bend and Five Points were a neighborhood of Southern Italian immigrants struggling in poverty.

[Figure 6.212] *G.W. Bromley*, 1891, Block 165, Future site of Mulberry Bend Park with Five Points on its southwest corner.

[Figure 6.213] Five-Points intersection, 1853 Plate 25, *William Perris Atlas, New York City*, 1853. Paradise, Anthony, Orange & Cross Streets.

The Health Department's 1888 statistics on disease and deaths of children per ward, noted that Block 165 had a population of 5,650; 944 of whom were children under the age of five. 202 of those children died in 1888. [Figure 6.214] Environmental determinists, like Jacob Riis, believed that the environment one lives in, buildings and landscape, as well as one's access to light, air and "breathing room," could have powerful effects on one's behavior, health and performance. The removal of this blight and its replacement with trees, grass and grand civic architecture built was intended to improve health and ennoble the neighborhood residents.[13]

[13] Steffensen-Bruce, Ingrid A., *Marble Palaces, Temples of Art: Art Museums, Architecture, and American Culture: 1890-1930,* NJ: Associated University Presses, 1998, 135.

Deaths and Death-rates in 1888 *in Baxter and Mulberry Streets, between Park and Bayard Streets.*

	Population.			Deaths.			Death-rate.		
	Five years old and over.	Under five years.	Total.	Five years old and over.	Under five years.	Total.	Five years old and over.	Under five years.	General.
Baxter Street	1,918	315	2,233	26	46	72	13.56	146.02	32.24
Mulberry Street ...	2,788	629	3,417	44	86	130	15.78	136.70	38.05
Total	4,706	944	5,650	70	132	202	14.87	139.83	35.75

[Figure 6.214] Population and Death Rates, Mulberry and Baxter Streets, Dr. Roger Tracy Registrar of Vital Statistics, as sited in, "The Bend," Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, 1890.

Despite the tenements' conditions, the owners of the condemned forty-one lots slated for the park's site fought condemnation, delaying the creation of the new park. When the disputes were finally settled, the total bill for the park's land, pre-improvements, was $1,522,055.[14]

Once it opened, the park was an immediate success with the neighborhood but playground activists, disappointed at its lack of a playground, continued to demand that the Parks Department install a playground in the park. By 1904, they would have their way, and Mulberry Bend Park had a playground. In homage to the Italian population living in the neighborhood surrounding the park, the Board of Aldermen changed its name to Columbus Park on September 19, 1911.[15] With this change, they effectively removed the historical connection, in name, to the block's history as the once notorious "Bend."

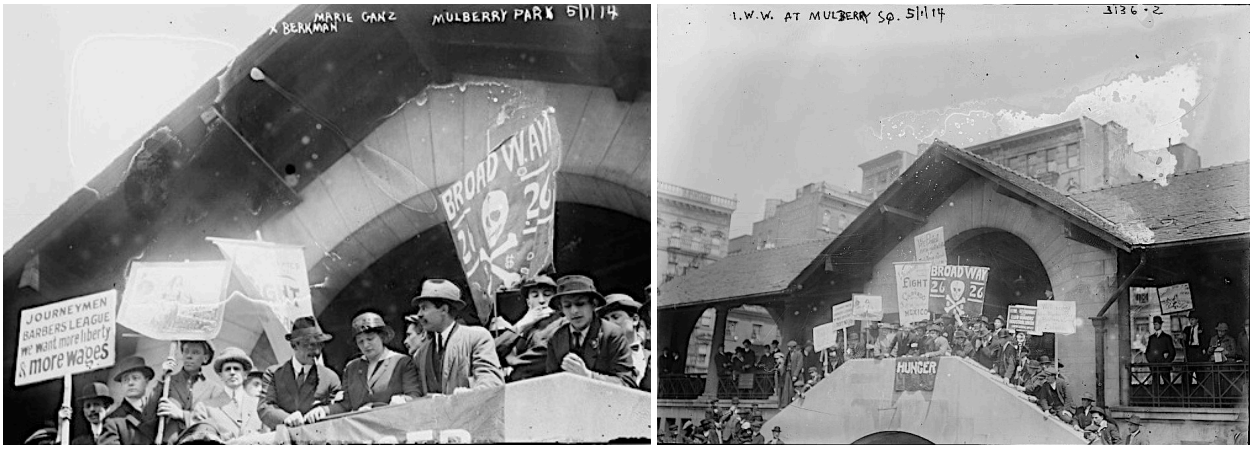
Three years later, on May 1, 1914, Alexander Berkman and Marie Gantz, both self-proclaimed "anarchists," led a protest again Standard Oil for its part in the Ludlow massacre.[16] Protesting at Standard Oil's 26 Broadway headquarters, Ganz managed to gain access to the area

[14] "Mulberry Park Property: Total Cost is $1,522,055," *New York Times,* December 8, 1894.

[15] Board of Aldermen, September 25, 1911. *Parklands File: Columbus Park*, Parks Department, City of New York.

[16] John D. Rockefeller purchased Colorado Fuel & Iron in 1902; his son, J. D. Rockefeller, Jr., managed CFI from 26 Broadway. Workers striking for safer working conditions, fair pay, right to bargain, and other freedoms, evicted from company homes, moved to tents. Strikebreakers Baldwin-Felts Detective agency fired machine guns on the strikers' tents (they returned fire), causing the deaths of 19-25 people, including two women and eleven children. On behalf of the Colorado strikers, Berkman and Gantz led rallies, marches and speeches against Standard Oil. Howard Zinn, "The Ludlow Massacre," *A People's History of the United States,* NY: HarperCollins, 1980, 2001, 355-357.

just outside John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s office, where she loudly declared him a murderer.[17] Ganz and Berkman then led a rally of the Industrial Workers of the World while standing on the main level of Columbus Park's Pavilion; finally, they moved to Union Square, where they lead a much larger rally of the same group. [Figure 6.215]

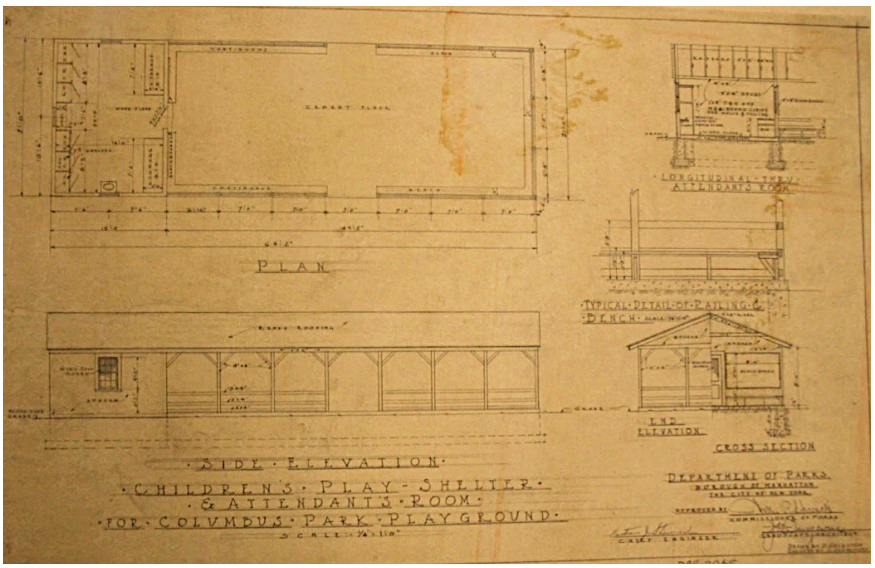


[Figure 5.215] Left: Alexander Berkman (below third white banner from left, in dark suit); to his right, Marie Ganz; Mulberry Bend Park's Pavilion (Industrial Workers of the World rally). Note skull and bones banner with 26 Broadway, Standard Oil's headquarters); Right: same scene. May 1, 1914, Bain Collection, Library of Congress.

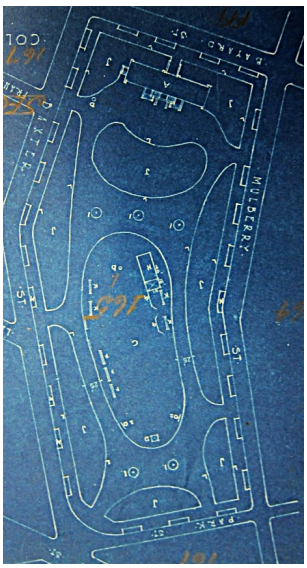
5.13 Additions, Restorations, Renovations & Preservation

Under Parks Commissioner Walter Herrick, the Parks Department's Chief Engineer Gustavo Steinacher designed a children's play shelter and attendants' room. Sited on the northeast corner of Columbus Park's center playground, the 64 by 21 foot open-air wood and stucco structure was built upon a concrete slab, where only the attendants' room had walls and a door. [Figure 6.130, 6.131, 6.132] Framed with 4 by 4 wood posts, the structure was topped by what Steinacher specified as a "ready roof." The recreation room had triple wooden railings and a continuous bench built on all interior walls of the room. The shelter entrances were on both the east and west elevations of the building. Clearly, this park structure was not intended to ennoble as the prior structure were meant to do; this was simply utilitarian.

[17] "Night Picketing at Rockefeller's," New York Times, May 1, 1914.



[Figure 6.130] *Children's Play Shelter & Attendant's Room Columbus Park* 1928; G. Steinacher, Chief Engineer, W. R. Herrick, Commissioner, J.V. Burgevin, Landscape Architect



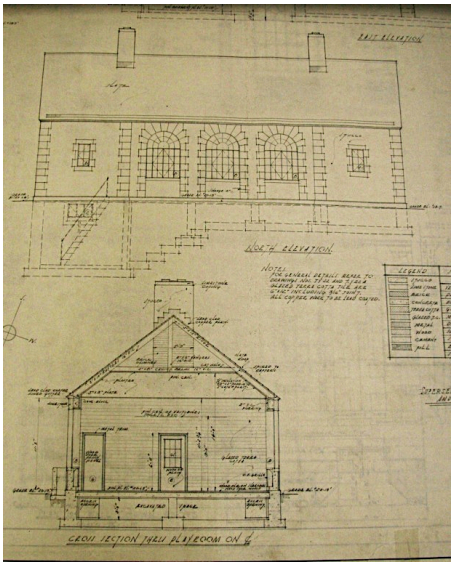
[Figure 6.131] *Site Plan-Columbus Park 1928-30* Parklands File, Parks Department City of New York

[Figure 6.132] Children's Play Center & Pavilion, Columbus Park. Play center on right, 1934. Photo Archives: Parks Department, City of New York

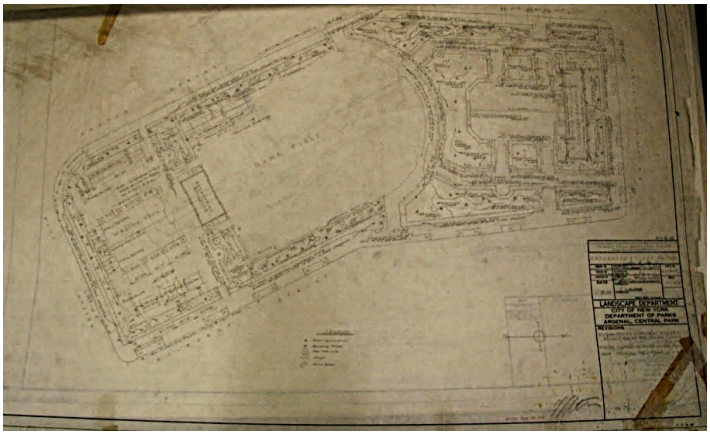
Robert Moses began his tenure as the Parks Commissioner in 1934 by making repairs and improvements in many of the city's small parks; Parks architect designed by Aymar Embury II designed a one story brick, stucco and limestone recreation building and comfort station. Sited in the center of the park with three arched windows on its northern elevation, the new structure was given a stucco surface, slate roof, limestone cornice, and lead-coated copper gutters and

downspouts. [Figure 6.133, 6.134] As part of the same project, a new wading pool was sited south of the recreation building while a large playing field was created on its north side, erasing Steinacher's Play Shelter from the plan. [Figure 6.146] Finally, Consulting Landscape Architect Gilmore D. Clarke created a landscape and planting plan with planting beds full of shrubs, flowers and trees, designed to surround the playing field, recreation center, wading pool and original pavilion, [Figure 6.145]

[Figure 6.133]; Recreation Building Construction, 1936, Photo Archives: Parks Department, City of NY



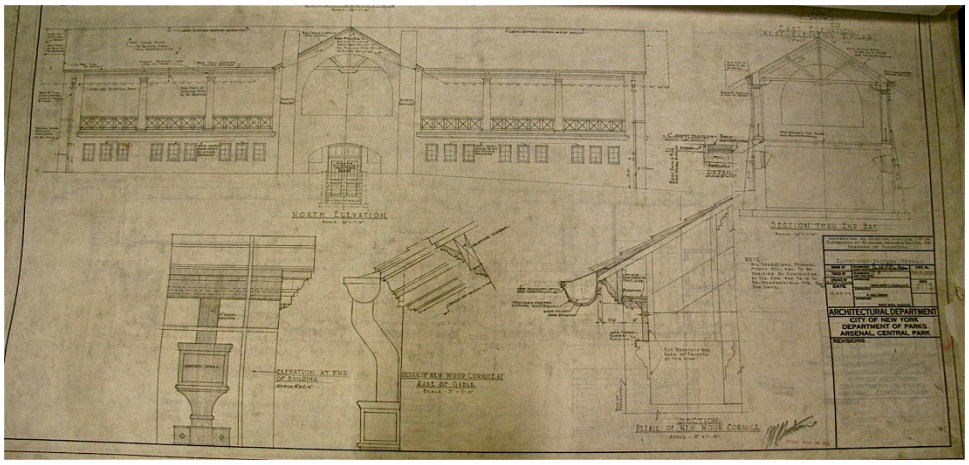
[Figure 6.134] Recreation & Comfort Center Columbus Park, Aymar Embury II, architect; Maps Olmsted Center, Parks Department, New York City



[Figure 6.135] *Apparatus & Planting Plan: Columbus Park*, Gilmore Clarke & Robert Moses, 1934; Archives: Map Collections, Parks Department, New York City

[Figure 6.136] Columbus Park: Wading Pool Looking northwest from Mulberry & Park Streets Photo Archives: Parks Department, New York, 1934.

Howard & Cauldwell's 1897 pavilion received some restoration and renovation work in 1934, designed by Embury. [Figure 6.137] His plans left most of the building as originally built, but called for windows to fill the unglazed openings of the lower level, as well as glazed double doors to be installed in the area under the segmental arch. He replaced all the gutters with lead-coated copper gutters, and specified a new slate roof to be laid over the original, on the ridgeline of which was to be installed a lead-coated copper ridge roll. In addition, three-inch lead-coated copper downspouts were to be placed in the corners of the pavilion's north and south elevations.



[Figure 6.137] *Pavilion: Columbus Park: Alterations and Repairs of Existing Structure,* Aymar Embury II, 1934.

With the 1934 renovations, the park made a strong shift into a recreation park. Very little of the park's green space remained except along its borders, and near the original pavilion where the planting beds and trees were used to separate the city from the park and create a small garden oasis escape for the park visitor. A 1936 photo from the Work Progress Administration suggests that Embury's plans were altered; the area under the central segmented arch was walled in, with a window installed. By the 1970s, the arch would be fully walled in. [Figure 6.138, 6.139]

[Figure 6.138] *Pavilion: Columbus Park;*
WPA Writers Project, Jack Rosenweig, 1936
Photo: Municipal Archives, City of New York.

[Figure 6.139]Pavilion: Columbus Park showing segmented arch walled in
Photo: Parks Department, City of New York, 1970

1971 brought an addition to the park: the triangular parcel of land just south of the park, between Park, Worth and Mulberry Streets, had been ceded to the city in 1964.[18] The city tried to sell Block 161, the triangular parcel containing Lots 34-41, with the understanding that the tenements on it would be razed, but there were no interested buyers. The tenements on the block were razed by the city as they were abandoned, and finally, block was transferred to the Parks Department.[19] To incorporate Block 161 into the park, the segment of Park Street, between the two parcels, was closed and incorporated into the park. [Figure 6.1300, 6.1301] Though this change was noted on paper, it would not be implemented in the Park until 1971.

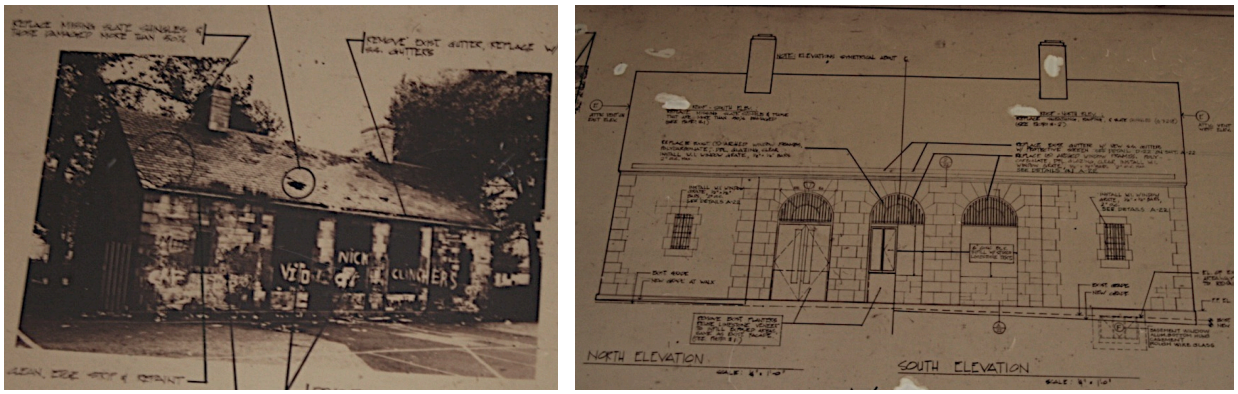
[Figure 6.1300] Before extension, *Columbus Park 1970*
Photograph: Archives, Parks Department, City of New York.

[18] *Parklands File: Columbus Park*, Parks Department, City of New York.
[19] Ibid.

[Figure 6.1301] Before and After: Columbus Park Parcel addition. Left: *Manhattan Land Book*, G.W. Bromley & Co, New York, NY, 1955, right, triangle bordered by Worth, Park and Mulberry Streets with Park Street Closure added to Columbus Park. Parklands File: Columbus Park, Department of Parks, New York City, 1964.

In 1982, the city was just starting to emerge from a long period of lean economic times, reflected in the condition of its parks. Columbus Park had been without much needed maintenance and the neglect was apparent; buildings had graffiti, slate tiles were falling off the roofs, and plantings had deteriorated or died. [Figure 6.1302. 6.1303] Architects Warner, Burns, Toan & Lund designed a three-stage renovation for the park. Stage I was to renovate the central area of the park, including the ball fields and the comfort station. Graffiti was removed from the comfort station, lead-coated copper gutters were replaced, missing slate tiles were replaced, and the ball field was re-surfaced. Stage II included adding the 1971 park extension, closing off Park Street, and landscaping and renovating the southern segment of the park. The area south of the comfort station was largely given over to playgrounds. Stage III included the restoration of the pavilion and the grounds surrounding the perimeter of the park. The pavilion would have its roof repaired, gutters replaced, stone work repaired and repointed, all lower level exterior windows, doors and hardware were replaced, and an access ramp was added on the northern elevation, as

required by law for accessibility. It is unclear when the area under the segmental arch was re-opened and the double glazed doors re-installed, but it might have been during this restoration.

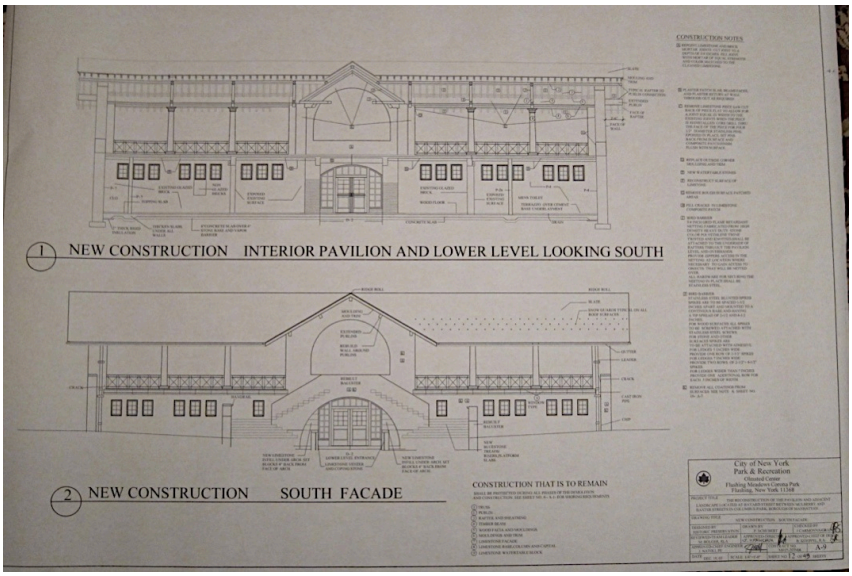


[Figure 6.1302. 6.1303] *Stage I-Photo and Elevation: Columbus Park Renovation*, 1979, Warner, Burns, Toan & Lund, Maps Archives, Department of Parks, City of New York.

[Figure 6.1303] *Columbus Park: Comfort Station*, 2012. Western & Southwestern Elevations, Photos: J. Frazer

The last major change to Columbus Park occurred in 2004, after the city received a 2003 bequest of $1.4 million, the entire estate of Joseph Temeczko, a handyman from Minneapolis. Temeczko landed at Ellis Island, when he emigrated from Poland, and had stayed briefly in New York before moving west. His wrote in his will that his gift was to honor those who "perished in the disaster of September 11, 2001." His gift was used to pay part of the 2004 renovation and restoration of Columbus Park and its pavilion. During the pavilion's restoration project, the Park's Department's Historic Preservation office was part of the design process. The pavilion

work involved removing non-original floors, stairs, interior walls, ceilings, doors and windows, and replacing the windows, door and floors. When ever possible, all original materials were retained and re-used on the pavilion. [Figure 6.1304]



[Figure 6.1304] Pavilion: Columbus Park, Department of Historic Preservation 2004
Maps Archives, Parks Department, City of New York.

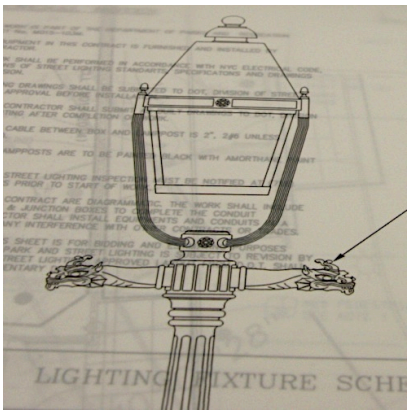
The large playing field sited in the park's center was re-surfaced, half with artificial turf, and half with asphalt, and special attention was given to the plantings beds and trees on the northern half of the park, particularly around the sitting areas near the pavilion. According to Linda McIntyre, in her 2006 *Landscape Architecture* article, the park was in a tattered state before this last refurbishment. The asphalt surfaces were cracked throughout the park, through which weeds grew, even on the playing surfaces. The park had very little seating available, trash strewn throughout the park, and worst of all, "the pavilion, fenced off for about a decade and accessible only to the hundreds of pigeons nesting there, was a crumbling eyesore."[20] The Park's department landscape architects, led by Hui Mei Grove, planned the re-design of the park's landscaping with the heritage of the mostly Chinese population that live near and use the park.

[20] Linda McIntyre, "A Giant Leap Forward," *Landscape Architecture,* December 2006, 1.

Their landscaping focus was primarily on the northern end of the park, around the pavilion and between it and the playing field. They planted the beds with Asian plant species such as katsura trees, stewartias, cherries, hostas, hakone grass and bamboo, and lined the planting beds with stones meant to evoke a mountainous Chinese landscape; many now use those stones as seating areas. [Figure 5.1305, 5.1306] In addition, new lamps were designed with dragonhead hooks, so that park visitors could hang their birdcages on the hooks. [Figure 6.1307, 6.1308]

[Figure 6.1305] *Reconstruction of Landscape Columbus Park* 2003, Maps, Parks Department, City of New York

[Figure 6.1306] Boulder Planting Bed Borders Columbus Park, photo: J. Frazer



[Figure 6.1307] *Park Lights and Dragonhead Detail* Columbus Park 2003, Maps, Parks Department, New York City

[Figure 6.1308] *Park Light: Dragonhead hooks Columbus Park* 2012, photo: J. Frazer

A local advocacy group for the Park, *Friends of Columbus Park*, leaned on the Parks Department to add Asian-inspired flourishes to the pavilion, such as changing the slate roof to a

sweeping pagoda roofline, as well as the addition of removable plexi-glass windows, and heating and cooling systems so that the pavilion could be used year round. The Parks Department resisted their requests, focusing on the historical value of the building, especially since it is original to the park. The Friends group does not have funds to match the energy they've devoted to changes in the park pavilion, but they intend to keep up pressure on the Parks Department.[21]

Since just before the opening of Mulberry Bend Park, the neighborhood has changed from the Bend where crime and poverty were prevalent, to one with a spacious park, offering light, air and health to the area's primarily southern Italian immigrant residents. [Figure 6.1309, 6.1310] The original name of Mulberry Bend Park reflected the street name of its eastern border, but with it, the state of the neighborhood at the time of its creation. Within fifteen years, the park's name was changed to reflect the heritage of the neighborhood residents. [Figure 6.1311] A visit to the park today reveals a primarily Asian population using the park. As described before, some of the park's lamps and landscaping reflects an Asian heritage. The park's shifting names, ornamentation and plantings beg the question of whether a park's buildings or landscape should change with the changing users of the park over time. So far, even though the pavilion and the comfort station have had some minor changes made to them, most of their original form is extant. Given that the buildings have survived all these years and changes in the park's use and care, to now replace the pavilion's slate roof with a pagoda styled seems a short sighted idea that if implemented, would rob the park of its historic integrity. [Figure 6.1312, 6.1313, 6.1314]

According to Riis, the impact of this park on its neighborhood was far reaching. Crime plummeted and people became healthier. Of course, other contributors such as schools, libraries and bathhouses could have helped affect these results, but one thing is sure, the people in the

[21] Linda McIntyre, "A Giant Leap Forward," *Landscape Architecture,* December 2006, 4.

neighborhood loved the park. More than one hundred years later, the neighborhood still loves it; a visit to the park any day of the week will find many people using Columbus Park.

[Figure 6.1309] "The Clearing of Mulberry Bend," *Review of Reviews*, 11:2, August 1895, 172
The tenements on the left were all demolished.

"Children at the Drinking Fountain" [Figure 6.1310]
E. Idell Zeisloft, *The New Metropolis*, New York: D. Appleton & Co, 1899, 253.

[Figure 6.1311] "Athletic Meet: Columbus Park Playground, under Direction of the Bureau of Recreation, Park Playgrounds of the City of New York," *Annual Report*, Department of Parks, City of New New York, 1913, Part II, 118.

[Figure 6.1312] Columbus Park Pavilion: Interior, looking west. Photo: J. Frazer.

[Figure 6.1313] *Columbus Park Pavilion*: Park Elevation

[Figure 6.1314] Columbus Park Pavilion: western entrance;

Both Photos: Shinobizerox, flickr.com

6.14 Conclusion

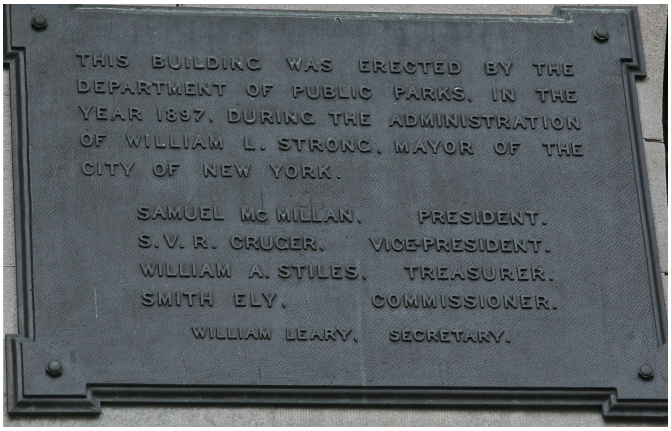
Mulberry Bend Park was the first of the small parks to open under the Small Parks Act. It replaced one of the most degraded blocks of tenement slums in the city, and was probably the most anticipated of the small parks to open, especially since the neighborhood had to wait for ten long years after the law was passed before they would see their new park.

Remarkably, all of the initial park property still remains in the park, and with it, its first structure, the overlook pavilion designed by Howard & Cauldwell remains extant with improvements on it that respect its origin. To the left of the upper level entrance, there is a bronze plaque installed on the exterior wall. [Figure 6.140] On the plaque, it reads,

> THIS BUILDING WAS ERECTED BY THE
> DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC PARKS IN THE
> YEAR 1887, DURING THE ADMINISTRATION
> OF WILLIAM L. STRONG, MAYOR OF THE
> CITY OF NEW YORK.
>
> SAMUEL MC MILLAN, PRESIDENT
> S. V. R. CRUGER, VICE-PRESIDENT
> WILLIAM A. STILES, TREASURER
> SMITH ELY, COMMISSIONER
> WILLIAM LEARY, SECRETARY

The plaque was created by someone who clearly recognized the importance of the

pavilion, though no indication is given on the sign of its creator or sponsor, and no literature has been uncovered yet to explain its existence. This plaque is the closest that the pavilion has come to being a designated landmark. Given that it was designed by two important architects, that it is original to the 1887 park with most of its elements in very good condition, it is highly recommended that the pavilion be considered a candidate for landmark designation.



[Figure 6.140] Commemorative Plaque, Park's origin and Parks Commissioners; photo: J. Frazer

Aymar Embury II's comfort station is another important element in the park worthy of preservation. The building itself is not as important as the fact that it is one in a larger body or work by Embury, many designs of which became small parks structures during the Great Depression.

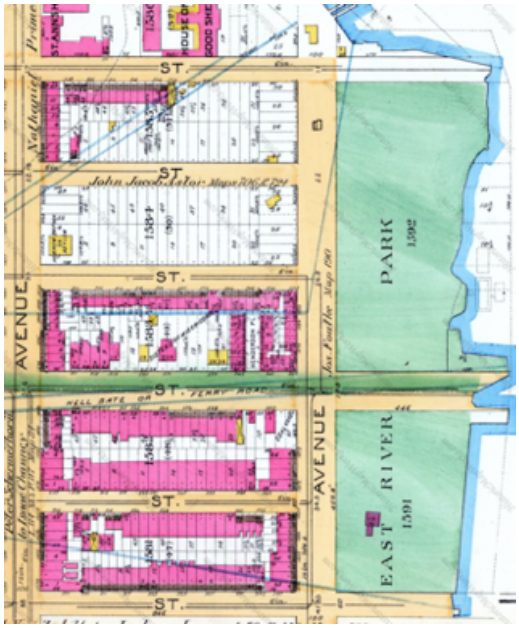
Gilmore Clark's Landscape plan did not respect that of Calvert Vaux's. Vaux's work was mostly designed over during the Moses years. In the last decade or so, however, there has arisen a new interest in preservation of landscape. The current landscape design in Mulberry Bend pays homage to Vaux's curvilinear pathways while also including the traditions of the Asian population that currently use the park. Other than by telling the story, it is impossible to preserve that which has already been removed. As preservationists, we should advocate for future designs in this park's landscape to always reference the important work of Vaux and Gilmore that were there first.

6.2 East River Park

One of the prettiest parks in all of Manhattan, the East River Park was laid out by Calvert Vaux. Not only is the park's landscape stunning, but its dramatic topography and view sets it apart from other parks. It is the home to Gracie Mansion, the residence of New York City's mayor; perhaps because of its association with the mayor's residence, this 12.546-acre park, located between the East River and East End Avenue, and stretching from East 84th Street to East 89th Street, is also one of the most well-maintained parks in the city.

The acquisition by the city of the East River Park "Extension" on May 27, 1891 added 8.6 acres to the already existing East River Park, acquired by the city on April 1, 1876.[1] The original park was bordered by Avenue B (now East End Avenue), the East River, 84th Street and 86th Street; the 1891 extension added the old Archibald Gracie Mansion to the park, as well the surrounding properties from East 86th Street to East 89th Street. [Figure 6.20, 6.21]

[Figure 6.20] Future site: East River Park Extension (Red outline); East River mis-named Riverview Park; E. Robinson, *Atlas of the City of New York*, 1885



[Figure 6.21] East River Park 1891
G.W. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of New York,* 1891.

[1] *Parklands File: Carl Schurz Park*, Department of Parks, City of New York.

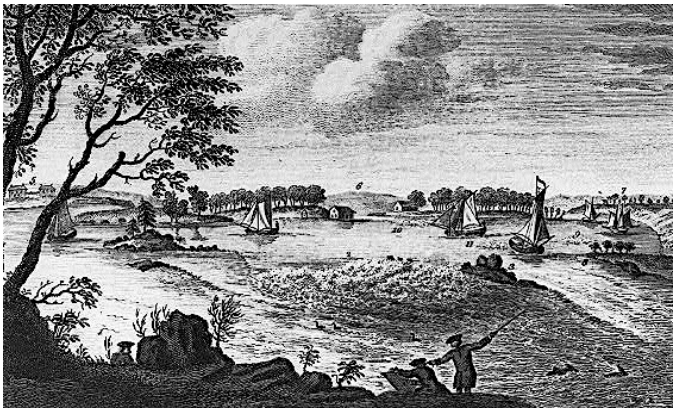
Bonds issued under the Small Parks Act funded the $522,118 purchase of East River Park's extension; though the area north of East 87th Street was sparsely populated in 1892, the area south of East 87th Street was much more densely populated, especially with children. According to the Committee on Small Parks, the nineteenth ward (south of 86th Street) "had great numbers of children dwelling in the districts along the river." Though the tenements were built "after the sanitary reform set in," the police reported trouble all along the line as the natural result of the children having no place other than the street to play"…resulting in "constant trouble and frequent arrests for ball-playing and breaking windows."[2] As of 1897, the children were not allowed to play on the grass in East River Park and there was no playground for them there.[3] Given that the area north of the park was not densely populated, and given that this park did not have a playground until many years after its enlargement, this purchase appears to have been one merely of opportunity: the Gracie property was available for sale and the city could finance the purchase through the Small Parks Act. Because this park encompasses the well-known Gracie Mansion, there have already been numerous articles, books and studies published about the mansion; this chapter will not provide an analysis of the house itself.[4]

6.21 Site History

The junction, just north of the park, where the varied tides of the East River, Long Island Sound and Harlem River meet, forms a whirlpool of currents over jagged rock formations. By the mid-1800s, one in fifty ships attempting to navigate that dangerous portion of the East River

[2] *Report of the Committee on Small Parks, City of New York, 1897*, New York, The Martin Brown Company, Printers, 1897, 15.
[3] *Report of the Tenement House Committee, as authorized by Chapter 479 of the Laws of 1894,* Albany: James B. Lyon, State Printer, 1895, 42-43.
[4] For more in-depth reading on the Gracie Mansion, see: Mary Black, *New York City's Gracie Mansion: A History of the Mayor's House 1646-1942*, New York: The Gracie Mansion Conservancy, 1984 and Ellen Stern, *Gracie Mansion: Celebration of New York City's Mayoral Residence,* New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2005.

endured damage or shipwreck, earning it the name "Hell Gate."[5] [Figure 6.210, 6.211] Despite the treachery, the "Hell Gate Ferry" delivered its passengers from Astoria to East 86th Street's pier during the mid-1880s; on and off over the years, various ferry companies operated from the East 86th Street pier. Parks Commissioner Robert Moses moved the Welfare Island Ferry from that pier to the East 78th Street pier when the park's 86th Street segment was closed in 1935.[6]



[Figure 6.210] View east from Gracie Mansion of Hell Gate, Province of New York, *London Magazine*, April 1778.

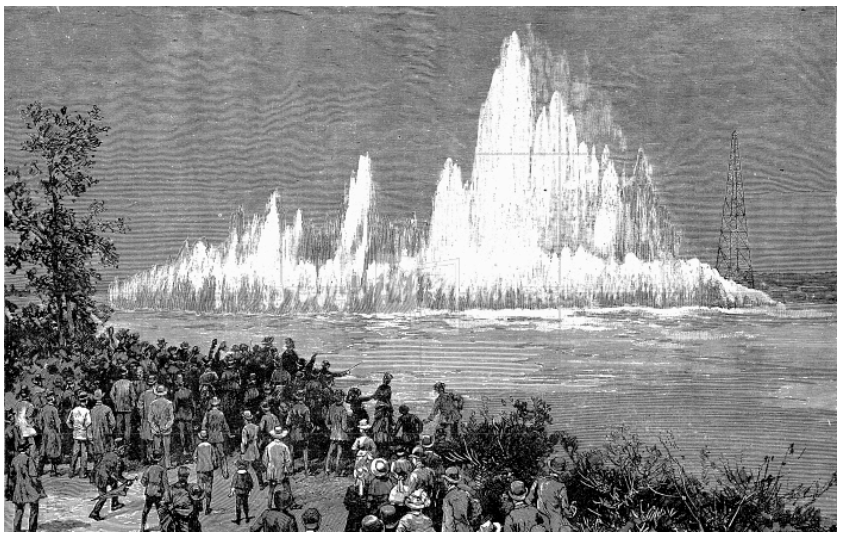
[Figure 6.211] East River Park & Hell Gate 1915 Museum of the City of New York

In 1876, the same year the initial East River Park was acquired, and eight years after the invention of dynamite, the United States Engineer Corps began a decades-long campaign of dredging, drilling and blasting to remove the worst of the rocks from the river, the greatest explosion of which was in 1885.[7] [Figure 6.212] The Corps continued their blasting into the 1930s, when they caused cracks and fallout in the park's seawall and in the walls of the buildings nearby, resulting in more repairs to the park's seawall. [Figure 6.213] Even with the Engineer Corps' rock removals, the force of the churning water created when the three bodies of water and their shifting tides meet, still visible today from the park, is a continued erosion threat to the park's coastline; maintenance of its seawall will likely continue indefinitely.

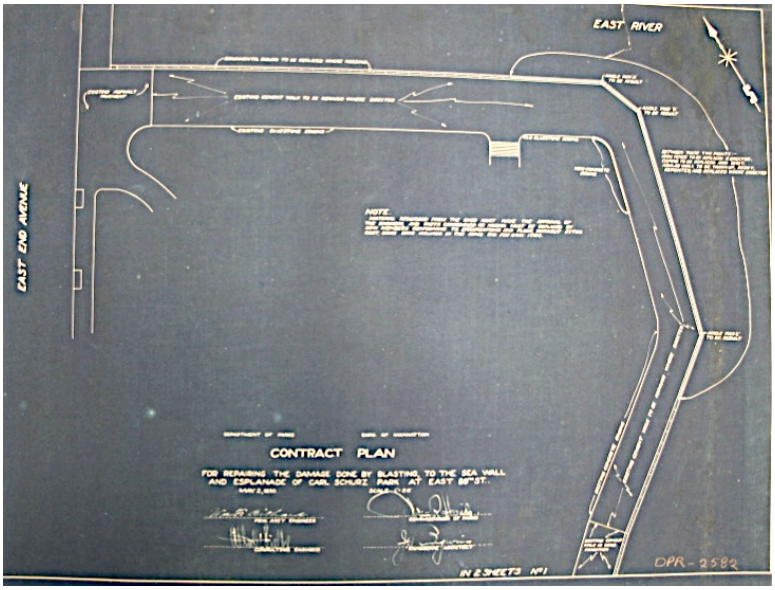
[5] *The Conquest of Hell Gate*, New York District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, http://www.nan.usace.army.mil as viewed April 24, 2013.

[6] "To Enlarge Schurz Park," *New York Times*, May 10, 1934.

[7] "Blow Up Flood Rock: General Newton's Report on Hell Gate Improvements," *New York Times*, August 15, 1885.



[Figure 6.212] Blowing up Hell Gate Rocks, seen from East River Park, *Illustrated London News*, October 1885.



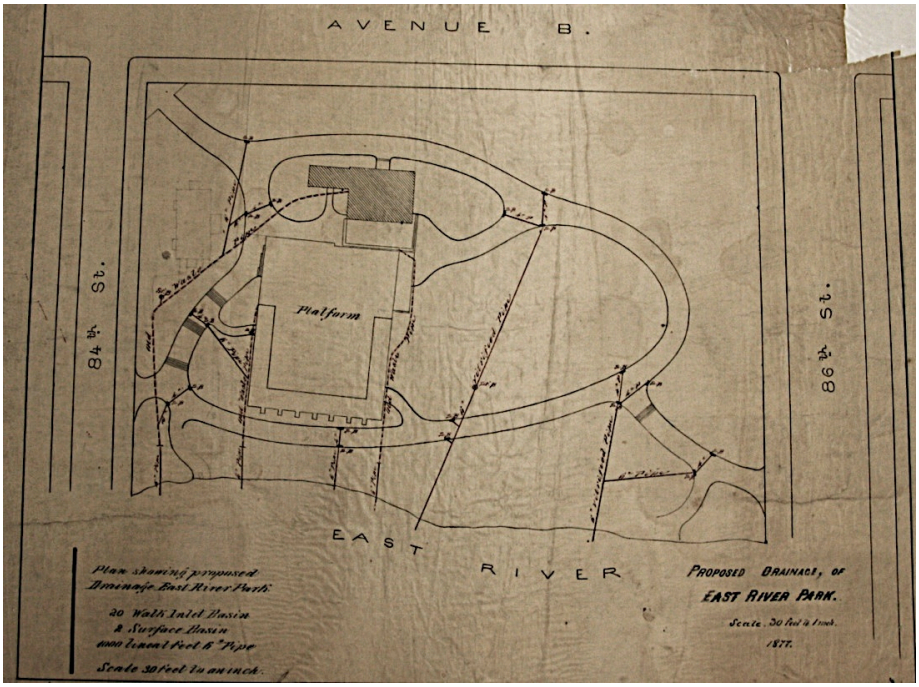
[Figure 6.213] Carl Schurz Park: repair seawall damage from blasting. May 2, 1930, Department of Parks, City of New York

From its acquisition of the East River Park and its extension, the Parks Department struggled to prevent erosion from the park's eastern-most border. An entry in the Parks Department's 1904 *Annual Report* described a protective sea wall they were trying to build:

> The building of a seawall stretching from 86th to 89th Street on the river border of East River Park was completed during the year. This work was begun in 1901, but SO treacherous was the nature of the foundation that it was found necessary to continually change and modify the plans. Pile foundations capped with concrete finally had to be constructed, and further serious difficulties were encountered in the slanting rock formation at the bottom of trenches.

6.22 Park Plans

Calvert Vaux designed East River Park's initial landscape after the city acquired it in 1876.[8] His 1877 landscape plan is characteristically curvilinear, oriented to the river view. While providing only one access point from it's southwestern corner, it offered four points of access to the East River to what might have been an un-planned promenade there. [Figure 6.220]



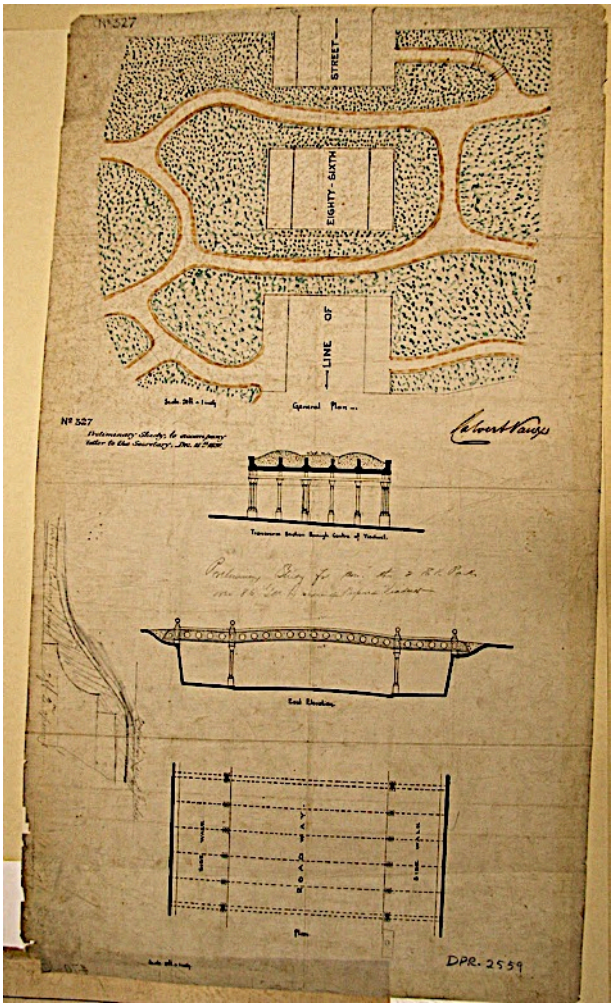
[Figure 6.220] Calvert Vaux: Park & Drainage Plan, East River Park 1877 (East 84th to East 86th Streets) Municipal Archives, Department of Records, City of New York

In 1893, he laid out the new "extended" East River Park in which he blended the older segment of the park with the new; Samuel Parsons implemented his plan after his death in 1895.[9] The new park opened to the public in 1902; the setting is spectacular; all eyes within the park are naturally drawn to its views of the East River. Vaux's challenge in laying out the park was with the large rock formations found throughout it. To remove the park's ledge would have been prohibitively expensive; included in Vaux's plan was his proposal for two 86th Street pedestrian

[8] Elizabeth Stevenson, *A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted: Park Maker*, New York: Maximillan Publishing Company, 1977, 318.

[9] "Obituary: Calvert Vaux," *Appletons' Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1895*, Volume 35, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896, 599.

crossings within the park. His crossings appear to have been built atop cast iron bridges with cast iron columns topped with soil and lawn plantings and finally, walking paths centered on the bridges. [Figure 6.221] By maintaining public access to the Hell Gate Ferry (East River at East 86th Street) between the columns and underneath the pedestrian crossings, Vaux's plan separated the pedestrian traffic of ferry users from those enjoying the park. [Figure 6.221]



[Figure 6.221] Calvert Vaux, Preliminary Study of East River Park, 1891
General Plan of Park as it crosses East 86th Street; with bridges, fill, landscape & walking paths.
Municipal Archives, Department of Records, City of New York.

Neither Vaux nor Parsons wrote about this park or published drawings of it; later maps, drawings and photographs indicate that though Vaux's curvilinear and meandering walking paths were implemented, his pedestrian crossings were not realized. In fact, East 86th Street was not

closed as a public street until 1935, even though all other streets that crossed the park property were formerly closed by the city upon the acquisition of each of the two properties.[10] The photographs in Figures 6.222 and 6.223 illustrate the implementation of Vaux's paths, the ledge within the park, and at the park's northern end Gracie Mansion. [Figure 6.222, 6.223]

[Figure 6.222] East River Park: 86th Street at East River, 1906, Wurts Brothers; Museum of the City of New York. Red arrow shows entry point at East 87th Street, for photograph in Figure 6.24.

[Figure 6.223] A path in Carl Schurz Park leading to the river; entrance at East 87th Street and East End Avenue, 1915. Photo: Museum of the City of New York.

[10] Parklands File: Carl Schurz Park, Department of Parks, City of New York.

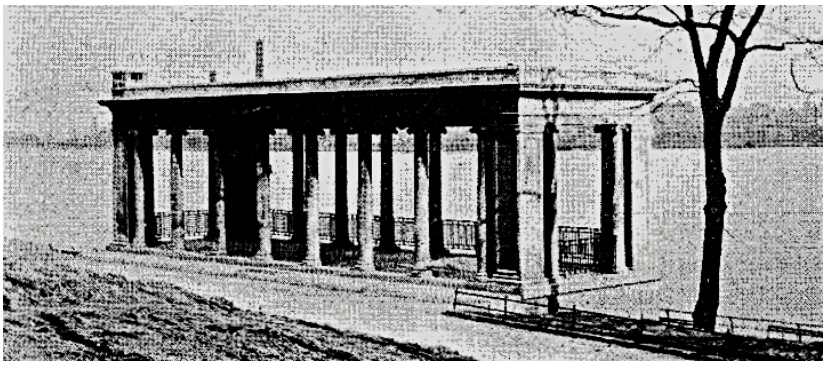
With the urging of the surrounding Yorkville residents, the Board of Aldermen changed the name of East River Park to Carl Schurz Park in 1910, to honor the German immigrant ho excelled in America, as a law school graduate, civil war officer, United States Senator, Secretary of the Interior, and journalist for the *New York Tribune*.[11] In addition, in 1913, a monumental bronze statue of Schurz, by Karl Bitter, was sited on Morningside Drive at West 116th Street.

Once the land was acquired by the city, the Gracie mansion was immediately put to use as the park's comfort station. By 1923, the mansion had deteriorated, and the limited budget of the Parks Department prevented the needed maintenance and improvements on the house. In an early attempt to form a public-private relationship in a city park, the state legislature voted to authorize the Parks Commissioner to give custodianship of Gracie Mansion to a "responsible organization for preservation and public use."[12] Choosing between the Patriotic New Yorkers and the newly founded Museum of the City of New York, Parks Commissioner John Gallatin selected the latter. After three years of restoration, the museum formally opened in a March 1927 celebration with eight hundred invited guests.[13] The museum remained in the house until 1932.

Late in 1926, Parks Department Chief Engineer Gustavo Steinacher began construction on a two-story brick comfort station. Referred to also as a shelter house, Steinacher's design closely resembled his 1925 Inspiration Point shelter (Hudson River Drive at West 190th Street), both of which were modeled after Theodore Videto's pergola and comfort station opposite Grant's Tomb. [Figure 6.224] Just as with his other comfort stations, this shelter was an open-air pergola of post and lintel construction, with one post on each corner, and a flat roof supported by a colonnade on all main floor elevations of the shelter. Sited at the river's edge, the shelter

[11] Theodore Sutro, "Carl Schurz Park: East River Park Bear His Name," New York Times, June 4, 1910.
[12] "Gracie Mansion in Dispute," *New York Times*, June 12, 1923.
[13] "Old Gracie Mansion on East River Open," *New York Times*, March 21, 1927.

housed its comfort stations below; they were accessed along its sides. This shelter would take the place of the comfort stations that park users had come to expect in Gracie Mansion.[14]



[Figure 6.224] "Engineer's Report: A New Comfort Station," *Annual Report*, Department of Parks, 1927, 76.

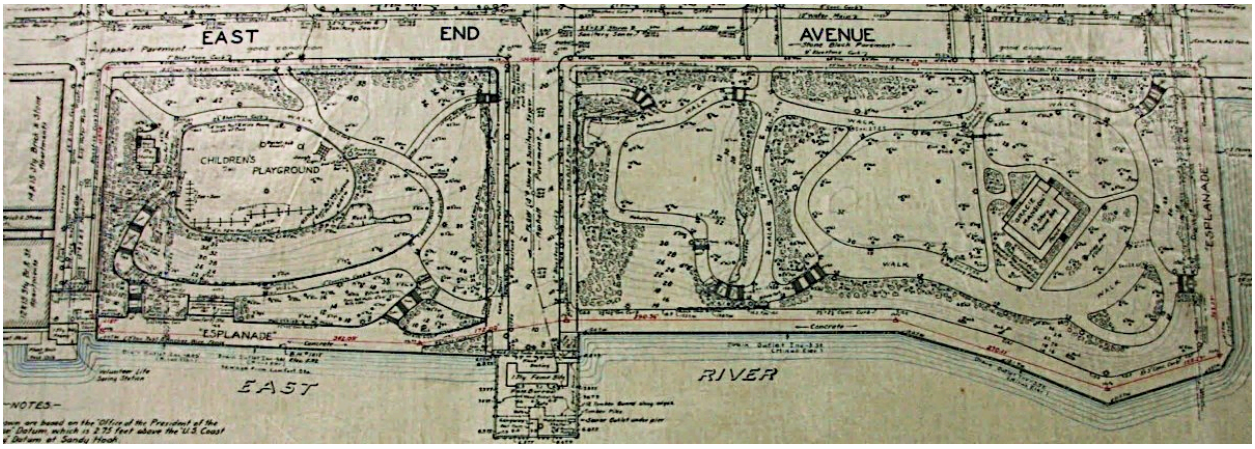
In 1930, Steinacher would design his second structure for Carl Schurz Park. His fieldhouse was a one and a half-story symmetrical brick building with stucco and terra-cotta block ornamentation. [Figure 6.225] It was a three-part building; the center portion had a north-south ridgeline gabled roof with centered Palladian windows facing the outdoor gymnasium.

[Figure 6.225] 1936 Bird's Eye View of 1936 Carl Schurz Park, East 84th to 86th Streets; Steinacher's Field House, at top. Photo: Archives: Photos, Department of Parks, City of New York, 1936.

[14] *Annual Report,* Department of Parks, City of New York, 1928, 6.

Flanking the center section were two one-story squared and hip-roofed comfort stations. Inside the symmetrical building were a director's room and playroom with comfort stations for both girls and boys.[15] The Park's Department's 1936 photo shows the pergola was fenced in, suggesting that it was either under construction or about to be removed.

In 1932, after the Museum moved out of Gracie Mansion to its new building on Fifth Avenue, Robert Moses was able obtain enough funds from the Works Progress Administration to restore the mansion. For two years, the Parks Department worked on both the interior and exterior rooms and though the mansion's original pieces were long-gone, they filled the rooms with period furniture. The Parks Department then opened the mansion for public view, but the public did not seem interested, as few came to visit it. At this point, Moses turned to the park's landscaping; the Department's 1934 topography map gives us a good basis for comparison with the new plans that were developed by 1939. [Figure 6.226]



[Figure 6.226] Carl Schurz Park-Topography Map 1934. Map Archives, Department of Parks, City Of New York.

While the park was being re-designed, Moses tried to convince Mayor Fiorello La Guardia that the mansion would be a suitable, if not a fine, location for the home of New York City's mayor. LaGuardia moved in, but not until 1942, after the completion of the Franklin

[15] "Engineer's Report: Carl Schurz Field House," *Annual Report,* Department of Parks, City of New York, 1930, 70.

Delano Roosevelt Drive and the re-landscaping project in Carl Schurz Park.[16] Since 1942, New Yorkers know Gracie Mansion as the Mayor's house; every mayor since then, with the exception of Mayor Michael Bloomberg, has lived there.

6.23 Some New and Some Old: Landscape Plans of Carl Schurz Park

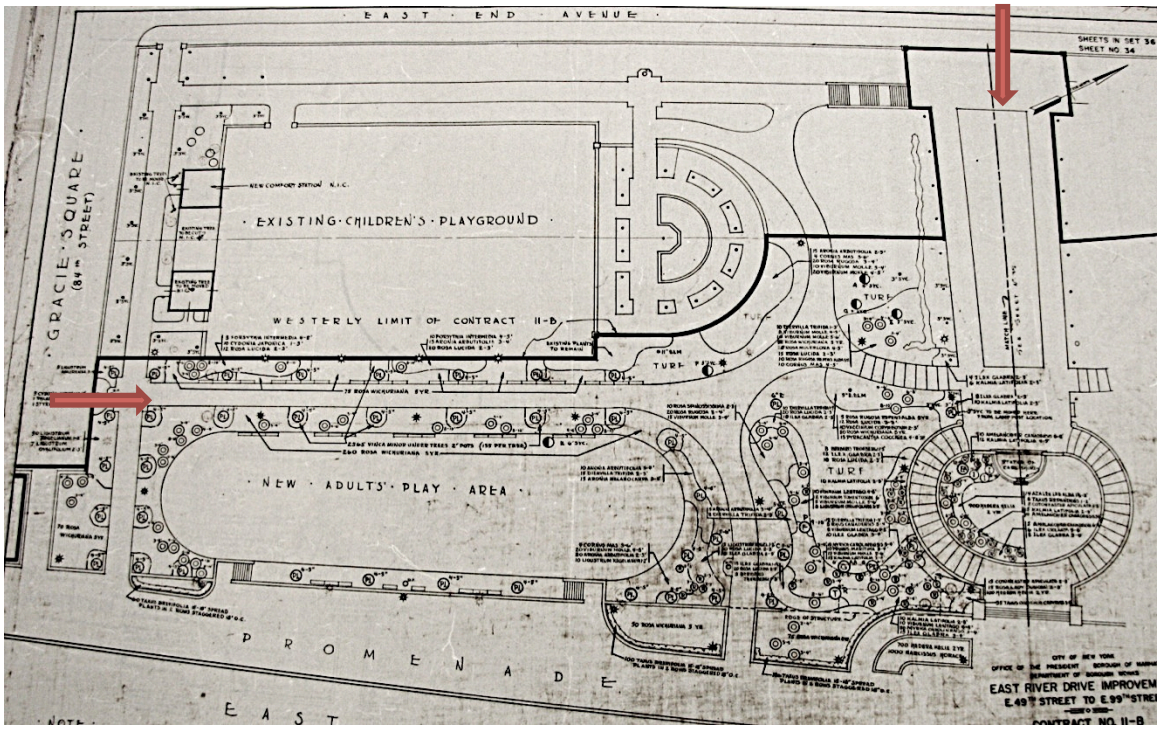
When Robert Moses constructed the East River Drive (now known as the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Drive or FDR), instead of removing part of Carl Schurz Park to make room for the drive right alongside it, he added fill to the river at the park's edge, and added a tiered system of highway roads, with three lanes going both north and south. A steel and concrete structure supported the roads, and paving over that, Moses created an extended promenade for the park on its eastern most side. One can now walk over the promenade, on top of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Drive, and not hear the busy traffic below. It remains a successful implementation of a park enhancement strategy, rather than the more oft-used option of reducing parklands for an increase in roads (see Dewitt Clinton Park or St. Gabriel's Park). In the case of Carl Schurz Park, the fact that Moses own residence, at 7 Gracie Square, was on the park's southern border, may have helped protect the park from reduction or defacement.

Along with the addition of the promenade, Moses implemented a major re-landscape project in Carl Schurz Park, while simultaneously landscaping the FDR Drive. Landscape architect Maud Sargent, in consultation with landscape architect Gilmore Clarke, developed the landscape plans for both the FDR and Carl Schurz Park. Her 1939 plan closed East 86th Street, and added a formal circular staircase at the end of the East 86th Street mall. [Figure 6.230] The staircase brings the park visitor up to the promenade level, over the FDR, where Sargent designed several half circular stone seating areas. This was an incredibly grand landscape plan,

[16] Ellen Stern, *Gracie Mansion: A Celebration of New York City's Mayoral Residence*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2005, 43.

both formal and symmetrical throughout the park, except for the area north of 86th Street, and west of the Promenade, where one cannot help but be reminded of Vaux's curvilinear paths, changing vistas and elevations.

Sargent's three pages of landscape plans do not indicate changes in topography or elevations in the park. The "Children's Playground," in Park Plan I, is surrounded on all sides by a stone-wall, the eastern elevation of which is quite high. The wall incorporates the large amounts of rock in that corner of the park, and helps to level what might have been a sloping landscape. The park's topography, south of 86th Street, is tiered. The "New Adults Play area," also in Plan I, is sunken, perhaps as much as four to six feet below the level, wide north-south mall sited between the children's and adults' play areas. Formally separating the two play areas, the mall's allées of trees planted on both sides of the mall in the early 1940s, are now fully mature and offer a lovely, cooling canopy of shade to the play areas in the summer.



[Figure 6.230] Maud Sargent & Gilmore Clarke: Planting Plan Part I - 1939, (Red arrows point to malls) Maps Archives, Department of Parks, City of New York.

On either side of the 86th street west-east mall, there are additional allées of trees; they lead the park visitor from East End Avenue to the base of a very formal circular staircase, at the top of which, suddenly, the East River comes fully into view. [Figure 6.231] Before the staircase was installed, the two parts of the park, on either side of 86th Street, include large outcroppings of rock; these are the same rocks that Vaux tried to design around in 1891. [Figure 6.232] In 1939, and still today, those rocks present a design challenge. Around them, trees are planted and stone staircases are built around their contours. With the promenade addition to the park, the antithesis of a Vaux plan was installed in the highly symmetrical stairs at the mall's end.

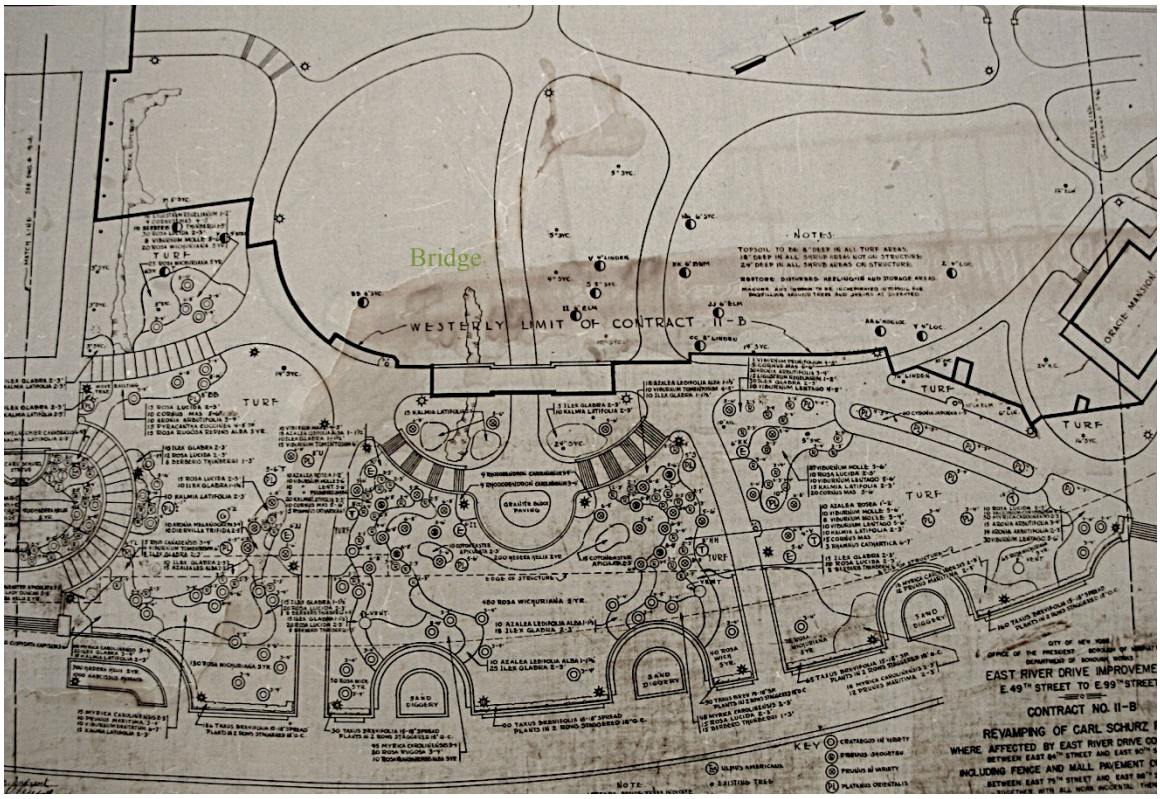
[Figure 6.232] 86th Street Mall; allée of trees

[Figure 6.231] Symmetrical Circular Stairs

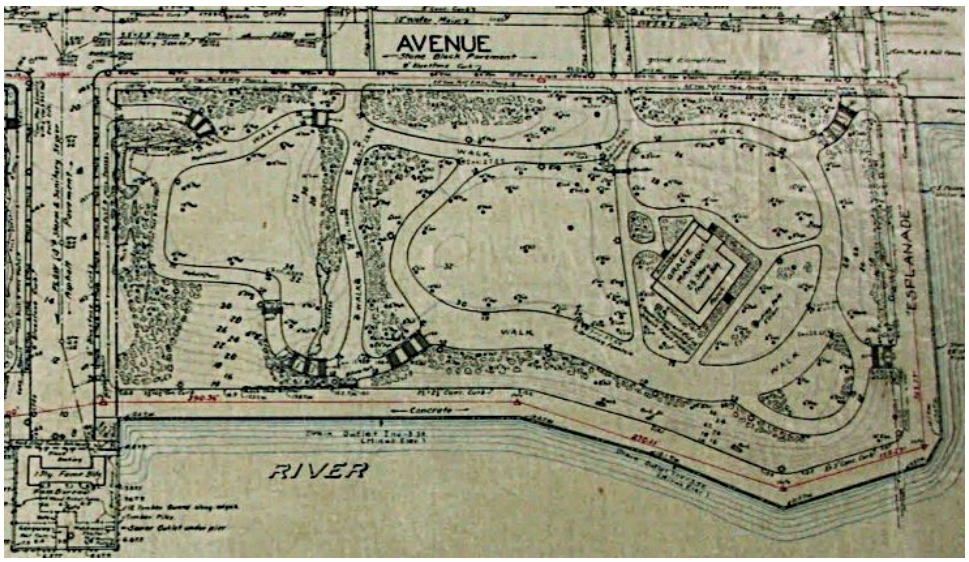
Photo Archives, Department of Parks, City of New York.

In Plan II, Sargent and Clark carried the formal promenade, and the half circular seating areas along it that they had in Plan I, but they left some of Vaux's original plan extant around the mansion. This is the only area in the park with the Vaux plan extant.[Figure 2.33] When a visitor climbs the first staircase from 86th Street south towards the mansion, he winds around the park, and suddenly comes to an area with a small bridge and a path that dips down below the bridge. Following the path below the bridge, the park visitor happens upon a little circular garden with a sculpture of Peter Pan within it. The changing elevations, the curving paths, the winding stairs, and the surprise of a small bridge or a path that meanders under it feel like a Calvert Vaux design.

In Sargent and Clarke's Planting Plan II, it is possible that they encountered these original components of Vaux's plan (present in Figure 6.226: 1934 topography map), and changed only the plantings. The park's eastern end, nearest the river, was filled in to extend over the new FDR.

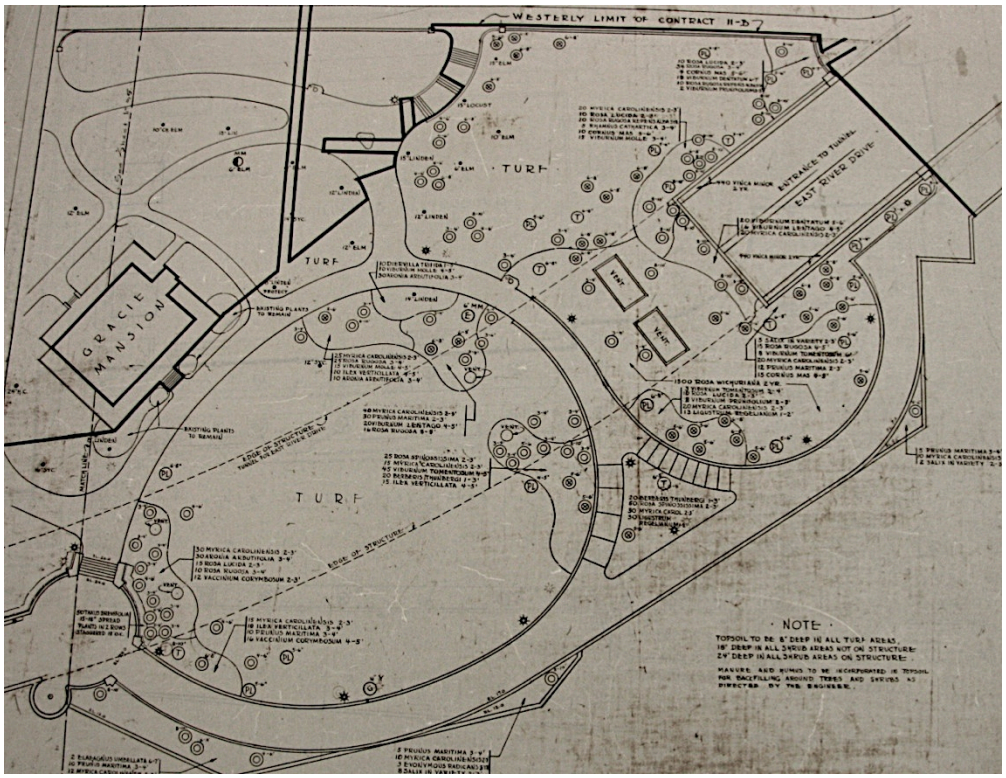


[Figure 6.233] Maud Sargent & Gilmore Clarke: Planting Plan Part II, 1939, Maps Archives, Department of Parks, City of New York.



[Figure 6.226] Carl Schurz Park-Topography Map 1934. Map Archives, Department of Parks, City Of New York.

In Planting Plan III, most of the plan east of the mansion is now under the control of the mayor's security and has a high fence around it. The plan appears to continue the curvilinear paths format, but with much larger plots of lawn and plantings. [Figure 6.234]



[Figure 6.234] Maud Sargent & Gilmore Clarke: Planting Plan Part III, 1939, Maps Archives, Department of Parks, City of New York.

In 1939, the same year the park was re-landscaped, Aymar Embury II, the Parks Department's chief architect, designed a new one-story brick recreation building and comfort station for the park. His new building replaced Steinacher's 1930 Field House, and was sited in the same location, centered on the southern end of the Children's Playground at East 84th Street. Embury's building appears to have been designed for utility and function, but it has some unique architectural components worthy of note. [Figure 6.235] It is a long building composed of two cubes, both of which are comfort stations. The area between the comfort stations does not have walls, but instead, decorative wrought iron fencing. [Figure 6.236] The monel-metal (nickel and copper) standing-seam roof is carried across the entire building, even the center portion lacking

walls. The center roof is supported by cast-iron columns, and sits lower than the hip roofs on the comfort stations flanking the center section. The roofs, though they are hip, resemble Japanese pagoda roofs, in that the peak is more pointed and prominent, with a little rise at its base. The Georgian style comfort stations are red brick laid in English bond, with red brick projections meant to appear as quoins on the comfort stations' four corners. The windows are double-hung, six-over-six divided-light aluminum, with two windows sited on each elevation not facing the center of the building. On the north and south elevations of both comfort stations, a single ten-paneled door is located between the windows. In addition, the eastern elevation of the comfort station has a door leading to an office.

[Figure 6.235] Aymar Embury II: Recreation Building and Comfort Stations, 1941; Photo Archives, Parks Department, City of New York, 1941.

[Figure 6.236 a, b] Embury: Recreation Center, from playground. Iron-work details. Photo: J. Frazer, May 2013.

A second comfort station was added to the park in 1942; this time in what appears to be a standardized cube form, of one story with brick facing, twenty-eight feet by twenty feet wide, with a small utility closet flanked by men's and women's bathrooms. It is located just north of 87th Street and just inside the park, a few feet from East End Avenue.

Two dog runs have been installed in Carl Schurz, one for large dogs, and one, with a river view, for small dogs. The dog runs are located on the southern half of the park, just south of the adult play area, and on the edge of the promenade, also next to the adult play area. [Figure 6.237]

In 2007, the Parks Department conducted a rehabilitation project on the Embury's Recreation Center. The roofs and the plywood beneath them were replaced with standing seam metal roofs, but the metal was unspecified in the plans. Because the building's brick had been painted, the paint was stripped off the building, while the windows were re-caulked or sealed, and if necessary, replaced. The cast-iron columns and grillwork were stripped of paint, then re-painted, and likewise, the chimney was stripped, but then, re-pointed, where necessary. With the exception of the roof, the building is largely extant and appears to be well cared for.

[Figure 6.237] Large and Small Dog Runs: Carl Schurz Park, Photos: J. Frazer, 2012

6.24 Conclusion

The last time I visited Carl Schurz Park, I realized that it is like being in two parks within one property. It can be easily divided between its elements of recreational programs in its southern half, Gracie Mansion in its northern half, and the promenade to the east. It could have been a purposeful effort by Maude Sargent to keep the sounds of athletics and children playing away from the mayor who might prefer silence in which to work. But, it is more than that. It is the style of landscape architecture that divides this park.

The southern half of the park is one of formalized tiers, where the landscape appears re-made and reformed into formally organized levels of function. The northern half of the park, around Gracie Mansion, has curvilinear paths that meander throughout that part of the property, changing elevations with the land, turning to reveal a garden, quiet spot, bridge, or clump of trees. This side too, may well have had its topography re-formed long ago, shaped into a layout designed by Calvert Vaux, but in use by a visitor, it feels much more naturalistic than the formal tiers of the park's southern half.

Carl Schurz/East River Park is one of the best-maintained parks in the city. Even though the park's last major re-landscaping was in 1939, it is in pristine condition. Two items in this park, worthy of continued preservation are the Embury Recreation Center and the landscape design in the park's northern half. An important and prolific architect, Aymar Embury II designed the Recreation center; while he worked for the Parks Department during the 1930s and 1940s, he produced substantial work, including several of the city's designated pool houses. The landscape of the Park's northern half may well be close to, if not the original, work of Calvert Vaux. If it is not, if follows the spirit of his work and allows the park visitor to experience what it might have been like to visit East River Park in the early 1900s.








Carl Schurz Park Photos: Jennifer Frazer

Chapter 7: The Carrère and Hastings Parks

Hudson Park 1898

Hamilton Fish Park 1900

7.1 Hudson Park

Neighbors were shocked in 1939, when workers, digging in Hudson Park for the new outdoor pool, discovered a child-sized cast-iron coffin in an underground vault: Mary Elizabeth Tisdell's casket had a glass window in its lid revealing a small yellow haired girl in a still-white silk dress. The silver coffin plate indicated that she died at the age of six, 89 years before, on April 14, 1850.[1] The site of an old coffin being unearthed was a big surprise to the local residents who were unaware that Hudson Park, their neighborhood park, was once a cemetery. Some ten thousand people were buried in Trinity Church's St. John's cemetery when the city condemned the property, forced Trinity to sell it to them, and then, built a park on top of the cemetery without removing most of the bodies.

St. John's Burial Ground was one of the first targets of the Board of Street Openings and Improvements as a location for one of the new small parks. Various newspaper accounts at the time reported, incorrectly, that the city entered suit against Trinity over its alleged breach of contract on the original land grant given Trinity in the 1700s, and that the land for the new Hudson Park was procured in this way.[2] But, that logic would lead the city to have gained much more land from Trinity than the 1.67 acres they sought. Instead, the cemetery was an easy target for the city; the land could no longer be used as a cemetery and had subsequently fallen into neglect and disrepair. Neighbors surrounding the cemetery supported the idea of a park in their midst, and compared to other potential small park sites, the costs to convert a cemetery into a park would be significantly less than having to condemn tenements, evict tenants, and demolish buildings. Aldermen representing the ninth ward, where the cemetery was sited, passed a

[1] "The Archivist's Mailbag: The Mummy in Trinity Church," Trinity Church Archives, April 1, 2009, www.Trinitywallstreet.org, as viewed March 30, 2012.

[2] "The New Hudson Park," *Scientific American Building Edition,* 27:6, June 1, 1899, 99.

resolution in 1889 to procure the land for the city.[3]

From that moment, until the transfer of the property to the city, Trinity fought the seizure of their property; Trinity's Comptroller, Steven P. Nash, led their campaign.[4] In his battle, he employed every legal option available, including the preparation of an 1891 Bill for the New York State Legislature in which he proposed to protect cemeteries against condemnation. Nash was heard in both the Appellate Branch of the New York Supreme Court and in the Court of Appeals; both Courts affirmed the Board Of Street Openings and Improvement's decisions.[5] Nash argued that the city should not make a park out of bodies, and although the courts agreed, they found the bodies could be moved. Nash tried to find family members of those buried in the cemetery who might protest on their relatives' behalf, but he found none.

Although there was already a caretakers house on the property, Nash offered that the church would "erect a church edifice, enclose the block with a fence, improve the grounds with shrubs and greenery, and leave the gates open admitting free access to all well-behaved persons during proper hours;" but, the Board of Street Openings and Improvements rejected his proposal.[6] [Figure 7.10 a,b] Once he conceded that Trinity would not be able to stop the taking of its land, Nash was able to negotiate, with the help of experts, a $100,000 increase of the Board's valuation of the property, bringing the total to $535,000.[7] Since the Board indicated its intention

[3] The ninth ward is bordered by West 14th Street, Sixth Avenue, Houston Street and the Hudson River; "Resolved, that the Board of Street Opening and Improvement, who by the provisions of Chapter 320 of the Laws of 1887 are charged with the selection, location and laying out of all parks…is hereby requested to take into consideration the propriety or advisability of acquiring and laying out as a public park the ground heretofore used as a burying ground included between Hudson, Clarkson, Carmine and Leroy Streets, as it is conceded on all hands that such park of public place is of the first importance to the health, comfort and convenience of residents in that part of the city." July 15, 1889.

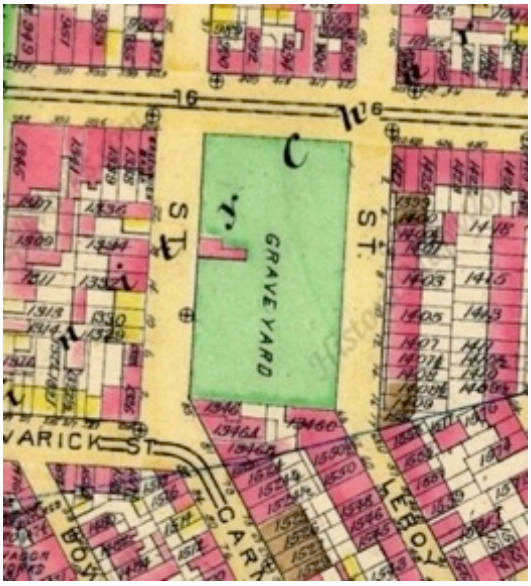
[4] Nash was not only Trinity Church's Comptroller, but also Clerk of the Vestry and former President of New York State's Bar Association.

[5] Noted in both Steven P. Nash's, "Report on St John's Cemetery," July 3, 1891, in *Archives: Trinity Church,* New York: 2.12.1896, and in April 1892, *133 N.Y Reports, 329*.

[6] Nash, 5.

[7] Nash, 6.

to assess the park's neighboring property owners for a portion of the park's costs, Trinity hired Truman H. Baldwin to rally the park's neighbors against the assessment and to agitate legislators for an assessment reduction or dismissal.[8] The legislature voted to allow the city to sell bonds to pay for the park's improvement instead of taxing the surrounding property owners.



[Figure 7.10 a, b] *Atlas* of the City of *New York,* Plate 10 Robinson & Pidgeon, 1885. *Manhattan Island,* Plate 9 G. W. Bromley, 1891.

Trinity's archival records reveal a careful documentation of all communications they had with family members who inquired after their loved one's remains. In one archival volume, Trinity employees recorded tombstone epitaphs, as well as any transfers of remains from St. John's Burial Ground to other cemeteries. All requests for transfers were immediately and politely accommodated by Trinity, but fewer than fifty people contacted the church to have their loved ones' remains relocated; a very small number in proportion to the approximately ten thousand reportedly buried there.[9] After title was transferred to the city, Trinity could do no more legally to protect the sanctity of the bodies buried there. Sadly, some descendants of the buried

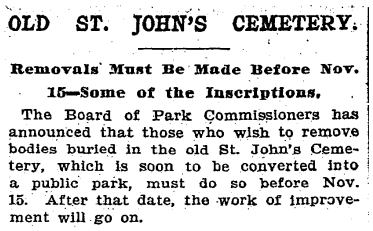
[8] Mr. Baldwin was promised 12.5% of each dollar he saved Trinity Church in assessment fees. Since Trinity owned a significant portion of the neighborhood, in which it served as landlord, their portion of the assessment would have been high: $96,199.92. Mr. Baldwin's successful campaign netted him the highest fee possible, a total of $12, 024.99. From: Nash, 7.

[9] "Minutes of the Standing Committee," *Trinity Archives*, New York: Trinity Church.

wrote to Trinity in the years after the land transfer when they discovered, on visiting what they thought were the graves of loved ones, a new park instead. At that point, there was nothing that Trinity could do; the remains had become part of the park.

In a effort to be respectful toward the dead, after the property transfer to the city, the city ran a small article in the papers, from September 10 to November 15, 1896, announcing that those interested in moving bodies should to do so by mid-November.[10] [Figure 7.11]

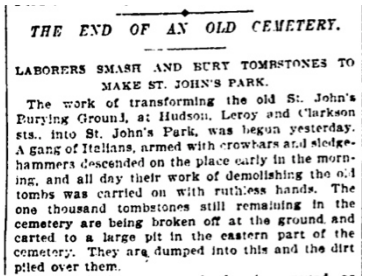
On September 28 of the following year, a "gang of Italians, armed with sledgehammers and crowbars, descended on the place early in the morning, and all day their work of demolishing the old tombs was carried on with ruthless hands. The one thousand tombstones still remaining in the cemetery were broken off at the ground and carted to a large pit in the eastern part of the cemetery."[11] [Figure 7.12]



OLD ST. JOHN'S CEMETERY.

Removals Must Be Made Before Nov. 15—Some of the Inscriptions.

The Board of Park Commissioners has announced that those who wish to remove bodies buried in the old St. John's Cemetery, which is soon to be converted into a public park, must do so before Nov. 15. After that date, the work of improvement will go on.



THE END OF AN OLD CEMETERY.

LABORERS SMASH AND BURY TOMBSTONES TO MAKE ST. JOHN'S PARK.

The work of transforming the old St. John's Burying Ground, at Hudson, Leroy and Clarkson sts., into St. John's Park, was begun yesterday. A gang of Italians, armed with crowbars and sledge-hammers descended on the place early in the morning, and all day their work of demolishing the old tombs was carried on with ruthless hands. The one thousand tombstones still remaining in the cemetery are being broken off at the ground and carted to a large pit in the eastern part of the cemetery. They are dumped into this and the dirt piled over them.

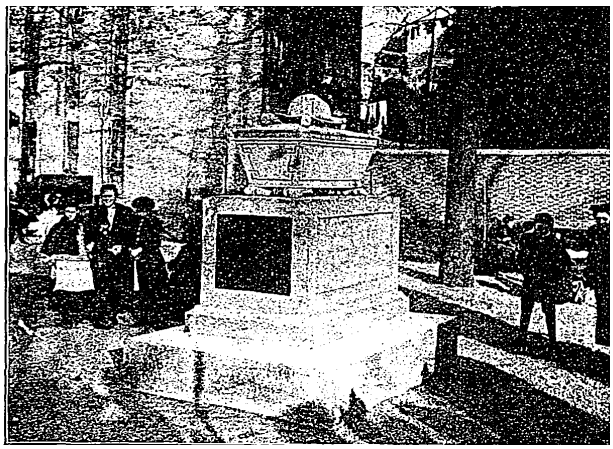
[Figure 7.11, 7.12] "Removals Must be Made by November 15" *New York Times*, September 13, 1896, 18. "Laborers Smash & Bury Tombstones" *New York Tribune*, September 29, 1897, 9.

When the laborers were finished smashing the tombstones, all that remained above ground to memorialize the cemetery was a marble sarcophagus shaped monument to two young firemen who had lost their lives in an 1834 fire. [Figure 7.13, 7.14] As this site had only one small gatehouse, the land was quickly cleared of its cemetery accouterments. The cemetery's old trees were retained, especially those on its perimeters, to provide mature shade to the new park.

[10] "Old St. John's Cemetery: Removals Must be Made by November 15," *New York Times*, September 13, 1896, 18.

[11] The End of an Old Cemetery: Laborers Smash and Bury Tombstones to make St. John's Park," *New York Tribune*, September 29, 1897, 9.

[Figure 7.13] St. John's Burial Ground,
Photo: New York Public Library, Date: pre-1896



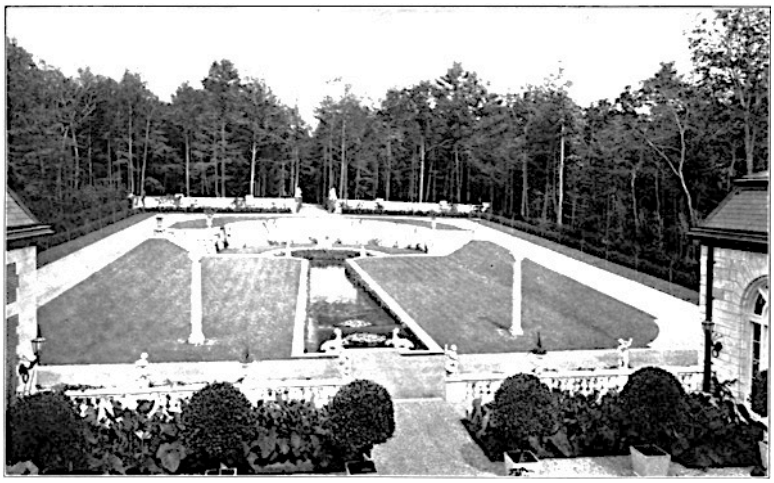
[Figure 7.14] "1834 Monument to War: Firemen"
Charles de Kay, "An Oasis in the City," *NY Times*
February 12, 1899.

7.11 Park Plans

St. John's Park opened in 1898; during the same year, the name was changed to Hudson Park, perhaps to disassociate the park from the site's former use as a cemetery. The second small park to open under the Small Parks Act, Hudson Park, was designed by Carrère and Hastings, the architects of the new main library. At 1.67 acres, it had characteristics of Luxembourg Medicis Garden, but also of two recent residential landscapes of Carrère and Hastings: the sunken garden court at Belle Fontaine, in Lenox, Massachusetts and the reflecting pool garden at Blairsden in Peapack, New Jersey [Figure 7.110, 7.112] Both of these gardens, as well as the Medici Gardens in Paris, have rectilinear plans with architectural elements. [7.113, 7.114]

[Figure 7.110] Transverse Section: Hudson Park, Carrère & Hastings, Drawings: Municipal Archives, Department of Records, New York City

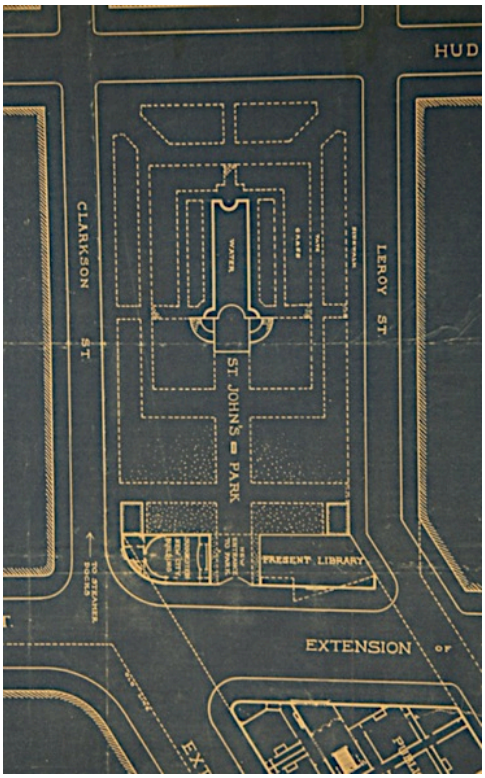
[Figure 7.111] F.E. Parshley photo, in "Design for Hudson Park, New York City, Carrere & Hastings, Architects," Kelsey, Albert, Editor, *The Architectural Annual,* 1901, 212.



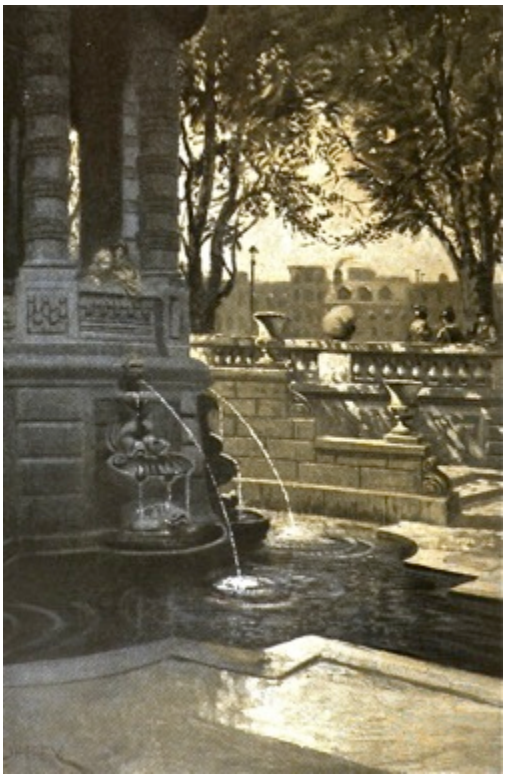
[Figure 7.112] Court at Belle Fontaine, Residence of Giraud Foster, Esq., Lenox, MA, 1897, "The Work Of Carrère and Hastings," *Architectural Record*, 27:1, January 1910, 41.

[Figure 7.113] Reflecting pool at Blairsden, NJ, Residence of Ledyard Blair, Peapack, NJ, 1898, "The Work Of Carrère and Hastings," *Architectural Record*, 27:1, January 1910, 56.

In Hudson Park, the circular kiosk or bandstand was framed by a set of stone stairs that wrapped around the kiosk and stepped down into the sunken garden and into the walkways that served to bisect the long narrow strips of lawn that ran the length of the park. The lawns, in turn, flanked a long central reflecting pool. Both sides of the path had short iron fencing as a deterrent to those wishing to walk on the lawn. At the other end of the sunken garden, a single, wide staircase led up to a pathway that surrounded the park in one large rectilinear loop. Indeed, this was a park for promenading … in a tenement district [Figure 7.114, 7.115]



[Figure 7.114] Plan: Hudson Park, Municipal Archives Department Of Records, New York City, c. 1915



[Figure 7.115] G. H. Shorey, "Hudson Square" Mighels, P.V., "Oasis in Gotham" *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 120: 719, April 1910, 784.

In 1899, Charles de Kay celebrated Hudson Park in the *New York Times*, "…the squalid little graveyard has blossomed…there are many wretched looking places in New York that await transformation…will the park encourage property owners thereabout to build handsome and comfortable homes? ...there is something very democratic in the dedication to the people of a

pleasure ground which suggest the neighborhood of a royal palace, as if its makers meant to say that there could be nothing too good to offer the people.[12] [Figure 7.116]

By designing this park to resemble wealthy estates or the highly esteemed gardens of Paris, Carrère and Hastings' goal seemed to be to elevate the status of the neighborhood. There is no evidence of inappropriate behavior by early park users, but neighborhood children's use of the park was not quite the same as its designers intended. They wanted a park for play, not promenading. A playground was installed in the park in 1903, and on hot summer days, when the fountains and reflecting pool represented cool relief, the boys jumped in. [Figure 7.117, 7.118]

[Figure 7.116] Hudson Park: George Pentecost, "City Gardens," *Architectural Record*, 1903, 14:58, 58.

[Figure 7.117] Hudson Park *Valentine's Manual of Old New York*, 1923

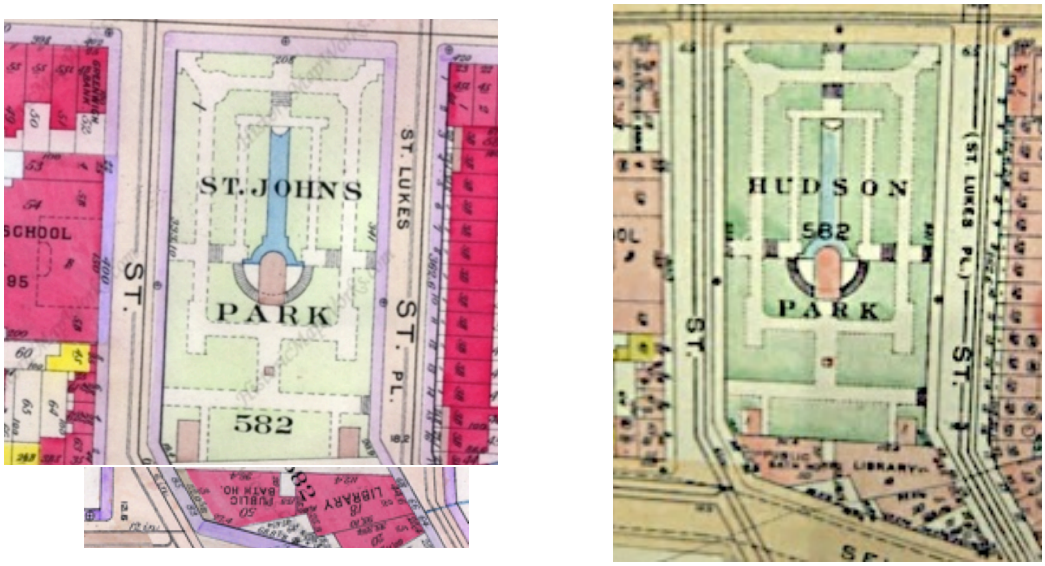
[Figure 7.118]*Neighborhood Boys - Hudson Park, 1912*, Charles Downing Lay, Library of Congress

[12] Charles de Kay, "Hudson Park: An Oasis in the City," *New York Times*, February 12, 1899.

The Hudson Park Library, designed also by Carrère and Hastings, was built in 1906. A two-story brick and limestone building, it was sited next to the park on its northeastern elevation, fronting on St. Luke's Place. [Figure 7.119 a, b] When, in 1906, a public bath was built fronting Carmine Street where Clarkson Street ended into it, it was sited on the southeastern elevation of the park, and backed up to the rear of the library. With the library and the public bath, the park would form a municipal trio of public facilities; each facility was built to improve the lives of the neighborhood poor by helping them be cleaner, healthier, and better read Americans. Before the public bath, Hudson Park had only two comfort stations, added to the park's northeast and southeast corners soon after its opening. Renwick, Aspinwall and Tucker's bathhouse, like the library, was a two-story brick and stone structure. Unlike the park, both the library and the public bath's materials and scale fit into the neighborhood's streetscape. In 1915, the city cut a swath through the block on the Varick Street side of the bathhouse, so that Varick Street could be extended further north, and as Seventh Avenue was extended further south, the two streets met right outside the bath, resulting in a clipped corner of the bath building.[13] [Figure 7.1110 a, b]

[Figure 7.119 a, b] View of Library from St. Luke's Street Neighborhood View from Hudson Library
Reaching the People: A Book of Carnegie Libraries, NY: 1906

[13] Gray, Christopher, "How 61 Grove Street Lost its Southeast Corner," *New York Times*, December 8, 1998, and "Seventh Avenue Extension will create Great Business Revival in Old Greenwich," *NY Times*, Sept. 24, 1911.



[Figure 7.1110 a, b] St Johns Park (sic), Public Bath & Library; Hudson Park, Public Bath & Library
Both: *Atlas of Manhattan*, G.W. Bromley; Left: 1909, revised 1915, Plate 33/34; Right: 1921.

The Carmine Street Bath House was enlarged in 1915, resulting in the building's encroachment into the park in the park's southeast corner. The expansion was necessary to add a pool to the interior of the bathhouse, and with it, a number of showers, which doubled the available showers in the bathhouse.[14] The pool was updated and renovated in 1930-31.[15]

7.12 Recreational Park

As part of a Parks Department citywide efforts using Works Progress Administration Funds to refurbish the parks, the Parks department built an outdoor pool in Hudson Park in 1938-39. The pool was sited alongside the bathhouse, in Hudson Park's southeast corner, and is connected through gates to both the bathhouse and the park. It was during the excavation for this pool that the cast iron casket was unearthed and subsequently moved to another cemetery.

Aymar Embury II, architect for the Parks Department in the 1930s and 1940s, designed the pool and its bleachers. The deck around the pool is concrete and a stuccoed wall creates a shield between the park and the pool along the western side of the pool. The wall is made

[14] "Public Bath Addition: New Indoor Pool and Doubled Capacity," *New York Times*, January 3, 1915.
[15] "City Pool is opened in Carmine St Bath," *New York Times*, October 30, 1931.

memorable by a mural painted on it in 1987 by well-known graffiti artist Keith Haring, three years before he died of AIDS. [Figure 7.120] His 18 foot high, 170 feet long mural consists of black outlined figures on a white background with splashes of yellow and blue; it depicts fish and people swimming and having fun together. In 2017, when the mural is thirty years old, it will become eligible for potential landmark designation, which will ensure legally, its preservation.

[Figure 7.120] Carmine St Pool Mural: Keith Haring, 1987; photo: Jennifer Frazer, 2012

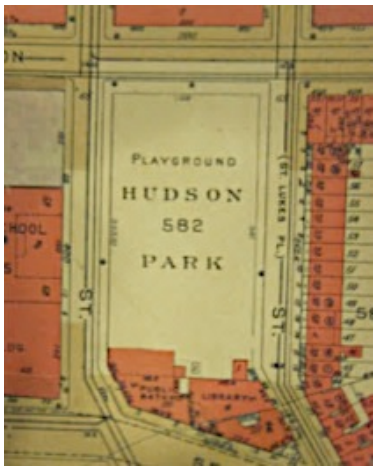
By 1935, Robert Moses was Parks Cimmissioner, and he oversaw extensive work in most small parks. That year, the sunken garden was filled in, the area in the northern part of the park become an extension of the playground and the southern and western portions were converted to a baseball field. In 1939, when the outdoor pool and wall were built, racketball courts were installed on the other side of the wall. While most of Carrère and Hastings' original iron and stone fencing still surrounded Hudson Park in 1940, the park had lost its beautiful trees. [Figure 7.121, 7.122] In fact, photographs indicate an absence of foliage, shrubbery or greenery. The park today has mature trees, indicating that they were planted sometime after the 1940 photos. Landscape changes that occurred in Hudson Park appear to have been utilitarian. Of its original fabric, the southern and northern iron fences and stone posts remain from Carrère and Hastings' era, while the marble monument is all that remains, above ground, from the cemetery era.

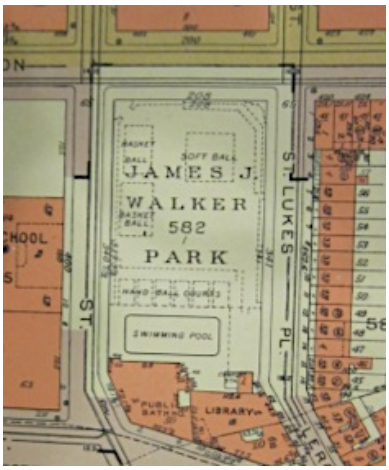
The park was paved over in asphalt in 1946; the following year, at the request of Mayor

Fiorello LaGuardia, the park's name was changed to honor his friend, former Mayor James J. Walker. [Figure 7.123 a, b] Except for a small handful of benches placed in the park, James J. Walker Park is almost entirely given over to recreation. It is worth noting that in its original construction as park, it afforded very little to no opportunity for recreation within its walls: it was a formal Beaux-Arts park meant for promenading and reflection. Its current iteration is basically the inverse of the original. For those who enjoy a quiet space in which to escape the city, read or have an intimate conversation with a friend, there is very little to no space afforded such stillness; this park is for those who intend to be in perpetual motion. Either plan strongly favors one group over the other.

[Figure 7.121] Hudson Park, 1940
Photo: Parks Department, City of New York

[Figure 7.122] Hudson Park, 1940
Photo: Parks Department, City of New York





[Figure 7.123 a, b] *Manhattan Land Book*, 1934
G.W. Bromley & Co

Manhattan Land Book, 1955
G.W. Bromley & Co.

7.13 Conclusion

The site on which James J. Walker Park now sits has a rich history, some of which is reflected in the elements still present in the park. From it's earliest iteration, as St John's Burial Ground, the white marble 1834 fireman's monument is the sole remaining above ground representative of the cemetery and of the bodies that may still lie under what is now the park.

Most of Carrère & Hastings' 1900 Hudson Park has been stripped from the site, but still remaining are the stone columns and iron fencing that line the southern and northern elevations of the park. Keith Haring's 1887 mural is kept in pristine condition by volunteer preservationists; in four years, it will become eligible for potential designation as a protected landmark.

Given that this park was designed by leading architects in 1900, who have designed so many important buildings for the city, not least of which is the main branch of the New York Public Library, and given that it is one of a collection of eight parks created during the progressive era, in which the citizenry of New York were willing to invest in infrastructure to improve the lives of the city's poor, this park is important to the city's memory and care should be taken to preserve at least the important representative elements in the park.

7.2 Hamilton Fish Park

Unlike with Hudson Park, where very few people were displaced in order to make a park, the two blocks in the 11th ward that were to become the third small park, Hamilton Fish Park, had many buildings and tenants who would have to first be removed before a park could be constructed.[16] The two blocks, known officially as block 340, bounded by Houston, Willett, Stanton and Pitt Streets, had sixty-three buildings inhabited by 1,650 people in 1897; this was considered one of the most over-populated blocks in the city.[17] [Figure 7.20 a, b] "Bone Alley" was located within one of the two blocks; it was the space between the back of the tenements that could be reached by an open area on one of the lots. The owner of that lot rented out the space to push cart owners as storage space, while in the alley were multiple examples of one of the tenement district's major problems: barracks, or second structures, built on the back lots.[18] The barracks would often be as tall as the tenement in front of them, containing even less access to light or air, and surrounded by the filth and refuse of the tenement in front of them. [Figure 7.21] This is where the least prosperous among the poor lived; in Bone Alley, one hundred families were reputed to be jammed into barracks.[19] Several reporters wrote about it as a worst example of tenement housing and landlord greed: "the evils the laboring classes suffer from the enumerated causes are greatly exaggerated by a species of subletting which extensively prevails in most parts of the city often subjecting them to the merciless exactions of capricious and unprincipled landlords, and also to the influence of circumstances which cannot fail to degrade them."[20]

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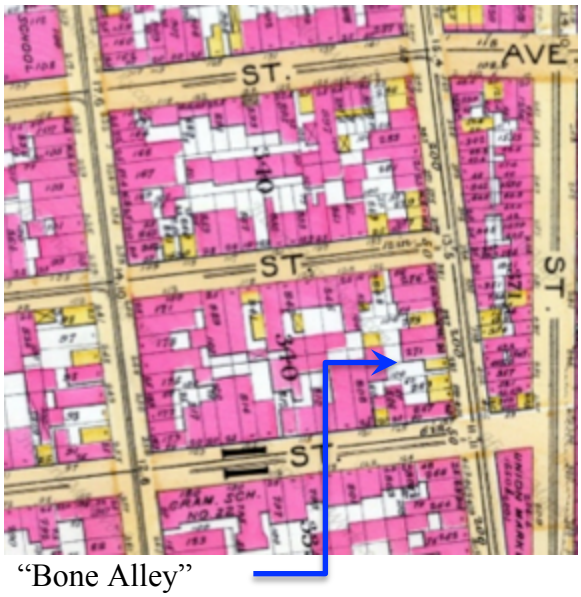
[16] The 11th Ward is bordered by East 14th Street, Rivington Street, Avenue B, and the East River.
[17] Frank Moss, *The American Metropolis: From Knickerbocker Days to the Present*, NY: P. F. Collier, 1897, 206.
[18] Kate Halloday Claghorn, "Foreign Immigration and the Tenement House in New York City," *NY Tenement House Commission: The Tenement House Problem*, V 2, NY-MacMillan co, 1908, 74-75.
[19] Moss, 206.
[20] From the *Report of the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, 1858,* as reported in Claghorn, 71.



"Bone Alley"

[Figure 7.20 a.b] *Manhattan Island,* Plate 7
E. Robinson & R. H. Pidgeon, 1885

Atlas of the City of *New York*, Plate 6
G. W. Bromley, 1891

[Figure 7.21] Jacob Riis, "Bone Alley," *A Ten Years' Account of the Battle with the Slums in New York*, 134.

The area's population was diverse with Italians, Poles, Germans, Hungarians and Russians, but the area was primarily populated with German Jews who worked as "rag-pickers" (also known as "chiffonniers").[21] In K. H. Claghorn's *Report on Immigration*, she takes care to note that the economic habits of the rag-pickers enabled many of them to eventually move up economically, and out of the neighborhood: a "colony of three hundred of these people, who

[21] Claghorn, 74.

occupied a single basement, living on offal and scraps…saved money enough to purchase a township on one of the Western prairies."[22] Those who were able, sacrificed their present for their futures through delayed gratification, but the human cost to them was severe, as the death rate of children under the age of 5 was 55.4%.[23] As high as this seems, some wards' rates of disease and death, particularly for children under the age of five, were even higher.

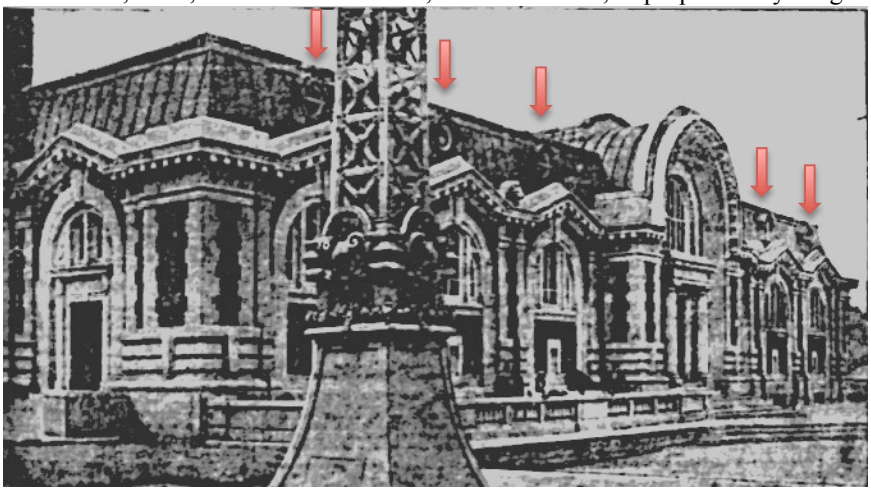
7.21 Park Plan

Carrère and Hastings' design of the 3.67-acre Hamilton Fish Park focused chiefly on the gymnasium building. Bordering the park was a low brick wall topped with limestone and an iron fence, but the area inside the park was minimally landscaped.[24] The focus instead, was on highly symmetrical architectural forms. Carrere & Hastings' Hamilton Fish Park gymnasium is an ornate two-story brick and limestone structure, which took its cues from Charles Girault's Petit Palais in Paris, a structure built for the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris. [Figure 7.210, 7.211] A large central entry arch is flanked by three arched windows on each side, each like the center arch, trimmed in limestone. [Figure 7.213] Small limestone lion heads were framed into a copper mansard roof at the midpoint between each arch. Originally, ocular windows were also framed into the roof, placed over each arch, but those have since been removed. [Figure 7.212 a, b]

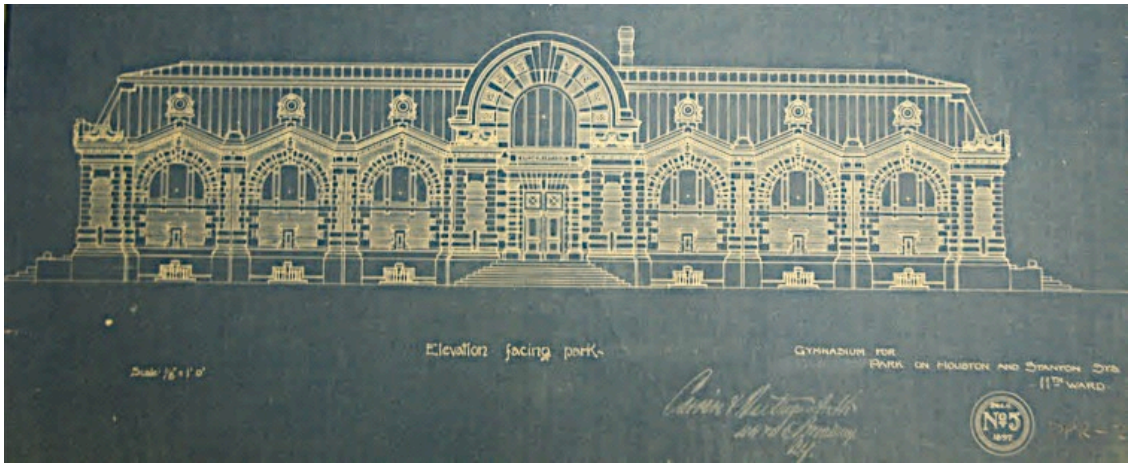
[Figure 7.210] Hamilton Fish Recreation Center, 2010, photo: Emilio Guerra, flickr.com

[22] Claghorn, 75.
[23] Advisory Committee on Small Parks, *Report of Committee on Small Parks, City of New York, 1897,* New York: Martin B. Brown & Co., 1897, 10.
[24] "President Clausen of the Parks Department indignant; Postpones Opening of Hamilton Fish Park, Criticizing Predecessor, Park Design and Expense," *New York Times*, May 24, 1900

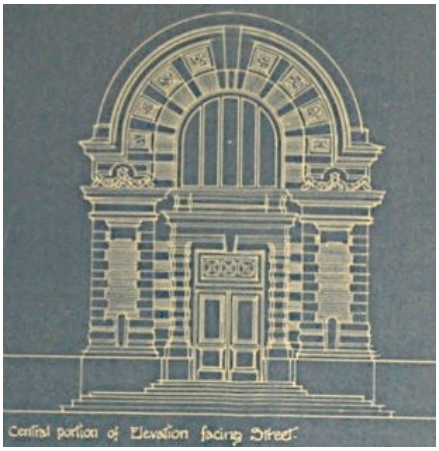
[Figure 7.211] Petit Palais, Paris, Universal Exhibition, Charles Girault, http://parisdiary.ebege.com



[Figure 7.212a] Exterior: Hamilton Fish Park Gymnasium, electric light column in foreground, showing ocular windows in mansard roof, *New York Daily Tribune*, May 27, 1900, 15

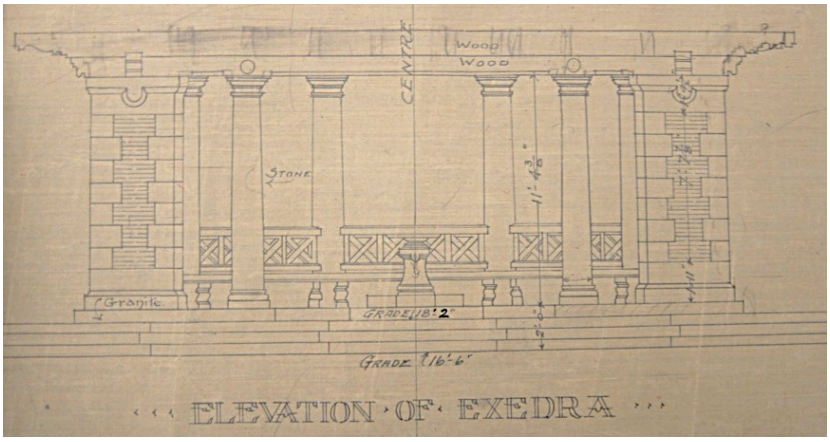


[Figure 7.212b] Elevation: Gymnasium, Hamilton Fish Park, (Rear) Façade Facing Park, showing ocular window in roof, Carrère & Hastings, Drawings: Municipal Archives, Department of Records, New York City

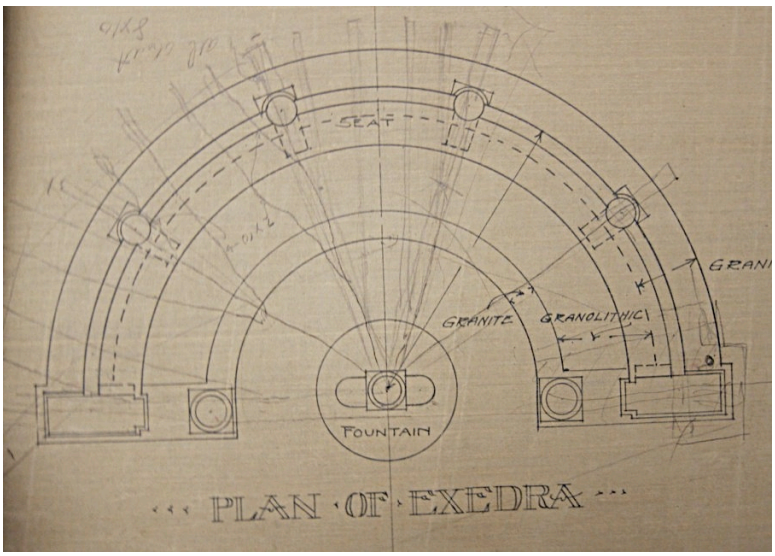


[Figure 7.213] Elevation: Gymnasium, Hamilton Fish Park, Entrance: Façade Facing Street, with Large central Entry Arch, Carrère & Hastings, Drawings: Municipal Archives, Department of Records, New York City

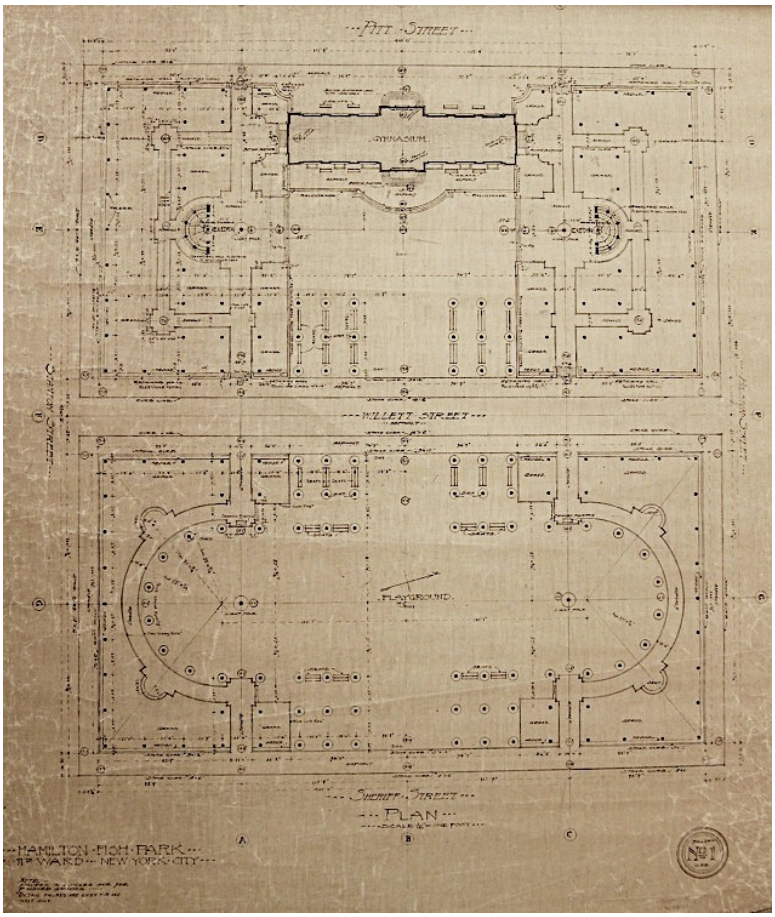
The portion of the park nearest to the gymnasium had one small exedra on each on the north and south façades, and in the center of each exedra, a sculpted fountain. [Figure 7.214, 7.215, 7.216] Small grass parterres were mapped into the plan, but they appear to be for dramatic effect, not for play surfaces, as they are grouped in the landscape as ornament with which to highlight the benches or exedras. The central plaza had a series of benches and seats, all arranged in a rectilinear fashion. The second half of the park, across Willet Street, had two large exedras to mirror the first smaller set, which served to enclose a large playground "paved in dirt." Grass parterres surrounded the exedras, while in the center of each exedra was a light pole. Trees were symmetrically placed throughout the park.



[Figure 7.214] Elevation: Exedra & Fountain, Hamilton Fish Park, Carrère and Hastings Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University



[Figure 7.215] Plan: Exedra & Fountain, Hamilton Fish Park, Carrère and Hastings Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University



[Figure 7.216] Plan: Hamilton Fish Park, with exedras, parterres & fountains, Carrère and Hastings, Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

Designed to be used by both boys and girls, the Hamilton Fish gymnasium differed from

others of this period, in that each group was allotted a full half of the segregated interior space, in both running tracks and showers. Typically, the boys' area would be far larger than the girls'.

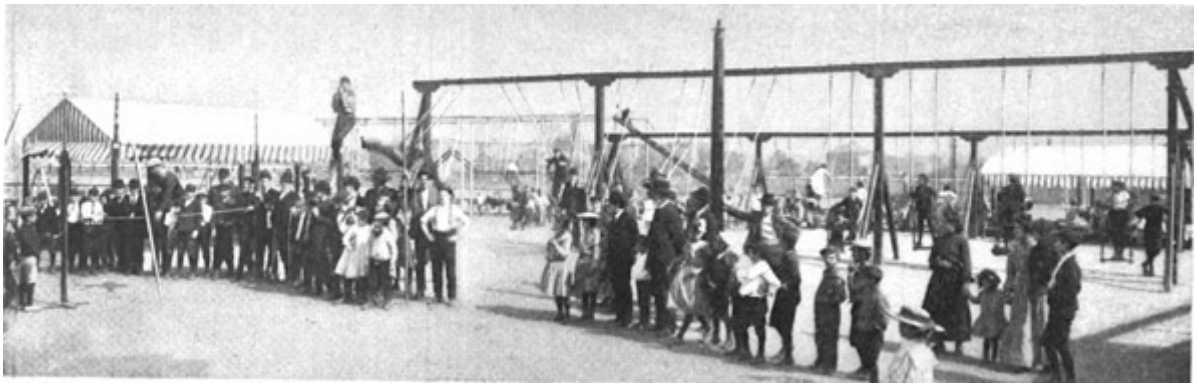
Before Hamilton Fish Park opened in 1900, Parks Commissioner George Clausen declared the park "extravagant, inconsistent with the park's surroundings, with very minimal landscaping and ridiculously inadequate public bath features." He feared it would be a "disappointment from every standpoint."[25] Even though this park was stunning, and might have been perfectly placed in Paris, Clausen's fears were at least partially realized. Hamilton Fish's gymnasium was not designed to be a public bath, so there were not nearly enough showers for that purpose. The opening ceremony at Hamilton Fish Park demonstrated the conflict between the lofty design and the neighborhood children; while Parks Secretary Willis Holly gave his welcoming remarks, little boys at his feet stuck pins into his legs. Some reformers hoped these boys with boundless energy would use that energy to become more physically fit, stay out of trouble, and learn to conduct themselves, with their guidance, as good citizens would. To the frustration of the Parks Department, and though the lawns in these parks were fenced and the children were told to stay off the plantings, they quickly trampled the landscaping.

By 1903, playground advocates prevailed and Hamilton Fish had a playground installed as well as supervisors to oversee it; its implementation would follow the 1903 opening of Seward Park's playground. The same year, a new program of athletic competition began in all the small parks. [Figure 7.217, 7.218, 7.219, 7.2110, 7.2111]

[25] "President Clausen of the Parks Department indignant; Postpones Opening of Hamilton Fish Park, Criticizing Predecessor, Park Design and Expense," *New York Times*, May 24, 1900

[Figure 7.217] Hamilton Fish Park, *Library Of Congress*

[Figure 7.218] Hamilton Fish Park, Facing Stanton Street, *Review* Magazine, 1905



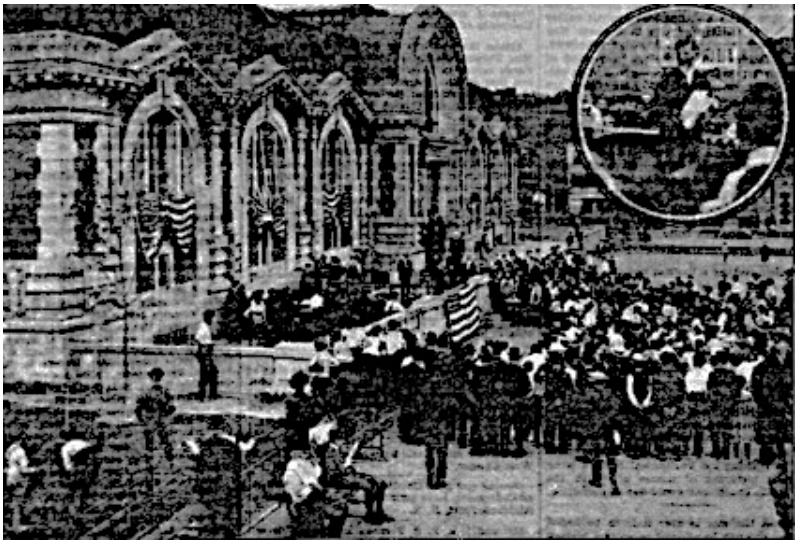
[Figure 7.219] "This playground has both and indoor & outdoor gymnasium and cost more than $200,000" *Munsey's* Magazine, May 1904, 290.

[Figure 7.2110] Hamilton Fish Park, Playground New York City Parks Department, 1903

[Figure 7.2111] Hamilton Fish Park Playground New York City Parks Department, 1903

Along with the playgrounds, a new program of playground supervision was implemented by the Parks Department and with that, the children who showed leadership qualities were chosen and trained to be youth leaders of the playgrounds. At Hamilton Fish Park, one such

young leader, sixteen year old Nathan Kase, was elected President by his playground peers of the park's "Playground City." With American flags draped on the gymnasium behind him, and wearing a new suit made by his father, a local tailor, he gave a speech following his inaguration; Kase promised to promote a fraternal spirt, further efforts towards good sportsmanship and "clean" athletics, and above all, to uphold the law.[26] [Figure 7.2112]



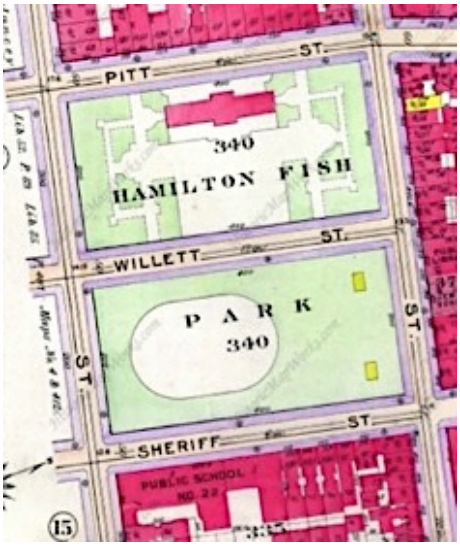
[Figure 7.2112] "Inauguration of the Mayor of Hamilton Fish Park," *New York Daily Tribune*, September 3, 1906, 5.

7.22 Recreation Park

Moses' influence on Hamilton Fish Park was not quite as pervasive as it was at Hudson Park, as enough integrity still exists in the Beaux-Arts gymnasium to allow for a New York City landmark designation in 1982.[27] The primary influence of the Moses era on Hamilton Fish park was a massive swimming program installed in the park. All of Carrere & Hastings symmetrical Beaux-Arts plan was removed, Willett Street was closed, ending the bi-furcation of the park, and in their place were built one Olympic sized pool and one crescent-shaped diving pool. Eventually, the diving pool was replaced with a wading pool.

[26] "Inauguration of the Mayor of Hamilton Fish Park," *New York Daily Tribune*, September 3, 1906, 5.
[27] Dolkart, Andrew, "Hamilton Fish Play Center: Designation Report," *Landmark Preservation Commission*, Designation List 162, LP-1264, December 21, 1982.

Historic maps reveal that in 1909, the park's eastern portion was wholly given over to playground with two comfort stations added on the northeastern wall. [Figure 7.220] By 1921, four additional structures were built along the northeastern wall, but no building permits are recorded, nor have news articles been found to explain their purpose.[Figure 7.221] Willett Street no longer crossed the park by 1934. [Figure 7.222] In 1935, the playground was de-emphasized and moved to the northern one third of the park, to make room for the new pools. [Figure 7.223]



[Figure 7.220] *Atlas - Borough of Manhattan*
G. W. Bromley, 1909, Revised 1915

[Figure 7.221] *Atlas - Borough of Manhattan*
G.W. Bromley, 1921

[Figure 7.222] *Manhattan Land Book*
G.W. Bromley, 1934

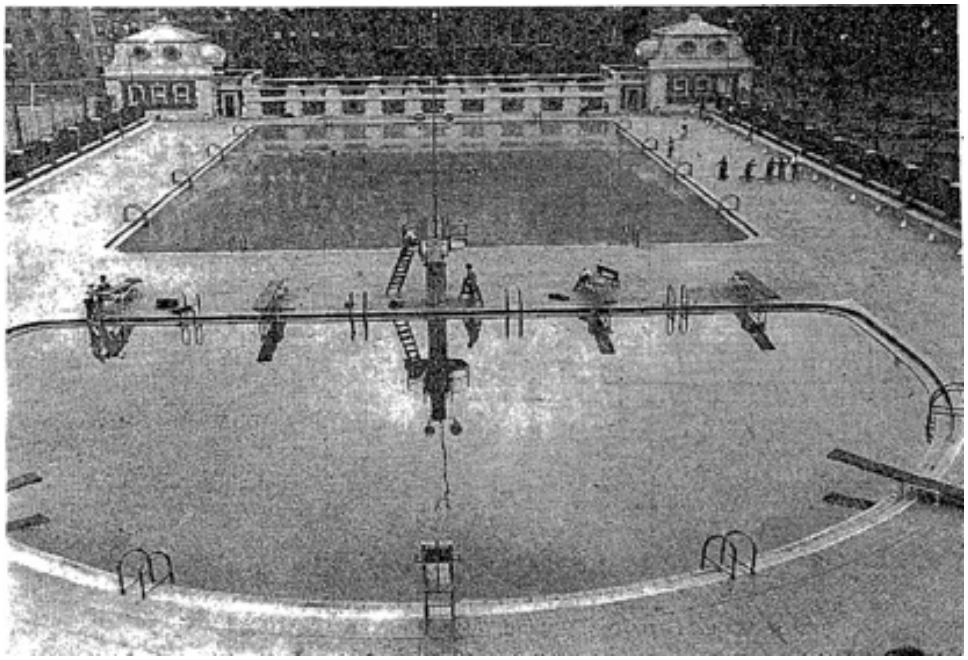
[Figure 7.223] *Manhattan Land Book*
G.W. Bromley, 1955

Aymar Embury, II designed and implemented, under Moses' direction, a one-story brick filter house and comfort station, measuring 190' by 33,' built against the eastern wall of the park. It was flanked by two comfort stations, each measuring 29' by 35,' and built in the park's southeasterly and northeasterly corners. He also designed and oversaw the implementation of a large rectangular swimming pool and accompanying crescent shaped diving pool in the central axis of the park.[28] [Figure 7.224, 7.225, 7.226] In 1964, a new building permit was issued to Brown, Lawford & Forbes for an $800,000 two-story public bathhouse, 35' x 271' to be located at 399 E Houston St, at the park's eastern border.[29] This may have been a renovation of Aymar Embury, II's 1935 filter house and comfort stations. Throughout these changes, the brick column and iron fence surrounding the park appears to stay intact.

[Figure 7.224] Hamilton Fish Park: View northeast across Diving Pool, Pool, Comfort Station, Filter House, toward East Houston Street and Sheriff Street, New York City Parks Department, 1936.

[28] *MetroHistory.com*, as viewed March 10, 2012.
[29] New Building Permit NB 44, 1944, Department of Buildings, as viewed at *MetroHistory.com* on March 10, 2012.

[Figure 7.225] Looking west, from atop the Filter House, towards the Gymnasium, photo: New York Public Library



[Figure 7.226] "$1,000,000 City Pool Opens Wednesday," Hamilton Fish Park: Aymar Embury II's Pool, Diving Pool, Comfort Stations, and Filter House, *New York Times*, June 21, 1936.

In 1992, the park was transformed once again. It had been closed and basically taken over by the neighborhood roughs who painted graffiti on the gymnasium and sold drugs in the dark corners of the park. Because a campaign initiated by the neighborhood and one man who had grown up benefitting from this pool, Sammy Fleischer, a retired subway conductor, the Parks

Department agreed to refurbish the park and its pools.[30] Paul Spears, of John Ciardullo Associates, tried to be sensitive to the park's layers of history in his redesign of Hamilton Fish Park. Perhaps because the Gymnasium was landmarked by the city in 1982, its exterior was preserved while the interior was converted into a community center with classrooms, and meeting spaces for community groups. The 1900 mansard roof, originally copper, was replaced with lead covered steel, and the graffiti was removed from the façades. [Figure 7.227] Spears' landscape design includes simple geometrics with circular planters, wide shallow steps and circular ramps through the park's many elevations. [Figure 7.228] These geometric shapes paved in brick surround the axial arrangement of the pools. [Figure 7.229] The trees, left as they were found when the project began, help to soften the original rectilinear plan of the park. In addition to the pools and playground, the park now has basketball and racquetball courts against its southern wall, and the diving pool has become a wading pool. [Figure 7.2210]

[Figure 7.227] Hamilton Fish Park: Copper Roof Replaced with Lead Coated Steel, Photo: Jennifer Frazer

[30] Muschamp, Herbert, "A New York Morality Tale with a Happy Ending," *New York Times*, September 6, 1992, H24

[Figure 7.228] Hamilton Fish Park: Circular Planters and Curved Ramps; photo: Jennifer Frazer

[Figure 7.229] Hamilton Fish Park: Axial Relationship of Pools to Gymnasium Retained; Photo: Jennifer Frazer

[Figure 7.2210] Hamilton Fish Park: Racquetball and Basketball Courts in Southeast Quadrant, maps.google.com

7.23 Conclusion

Hamilton Fish Park has important elements remaining in the park, most important is the designated gymnasium. This park, as a whole, and not just the gymnasium, is important to the history of the small parks movement in New York City, but also as a contribution to the long list of Carrère and Hastings parks designs. In this park, they demonstrated that good, high-end architecture can uplift the human soul and motivate it to want to aspire for good health, good citizenship, and good character. The people in the neighborhoods in which Hamilton Fish Park was sited may have appreciated the lofty ideals of Carrère and Hastings, but ultimately, it seemed, they wanted their parks for recreation use. When Robert Moses and his staff changed the landscape of these parks, he was, again, responding to what the majority of New York City's citizens wanted. Today, a visit to the park on even winter's coldest day, finds adults and children alike playing on the playgrounds.

In considering the preservation of this park, it is important to not just pay attention to the gymnasium, but to take into account the 1936 pools, still popular almost eighty years later, the original brick column and iron fencing surrounding the park on its north, south, and western facades, the general axial plan of the park and its symmetrical relationship to that of Carrere & Hastings original plan, and finally, the importance of the non-reduced land allotted to this 1900 small park. All of these elements are worthy of preservation, and this park, as a unique, and therefore very special, contribution to the small parks movement in New York City should be included in any designation for a representative collection of small parks movement parks.

Chapter 8: The Parsons Parks

John Jay Park 1902

William H. Seward Park 1903

DeWitt Clinton Park 1905

St. Gabriel's Park 1906

8.1 John Jay Park

John Jay Park, the first of Samuel Parsons' small parks, did not have a grand opening celebration with speeches, grandstands and children rushing in to pounce on its gymnasium and teeter-totters. Instead, this park opened in parts, over time, starting in 1902. 3.004 acres of land, sited between Exterior Street (now the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Drive), East 76th and East 78th Streets, were acquired by condemnation for a new small park in 1902; its southern half, below 77th Street, opened the same year with only a playground. The Parks Department cleared the southern lot, placed elements of an outdoor gymnasium in the park area, and allowed children to play there. Meanwhile, over the next twelve years, the land was graded, a very high stone retaining wall were built surrounding the entire park, while Cherokee Street, on the park's western side was opened, and with it, East 77th Street between Exterior Street and Cherokee Street was closed. Large amounts of fill were brought in to level the park, and after going through multiple iterations of design, on December 12th, 1914, John Jay Park was finally, formerly opened with a new field house![1]

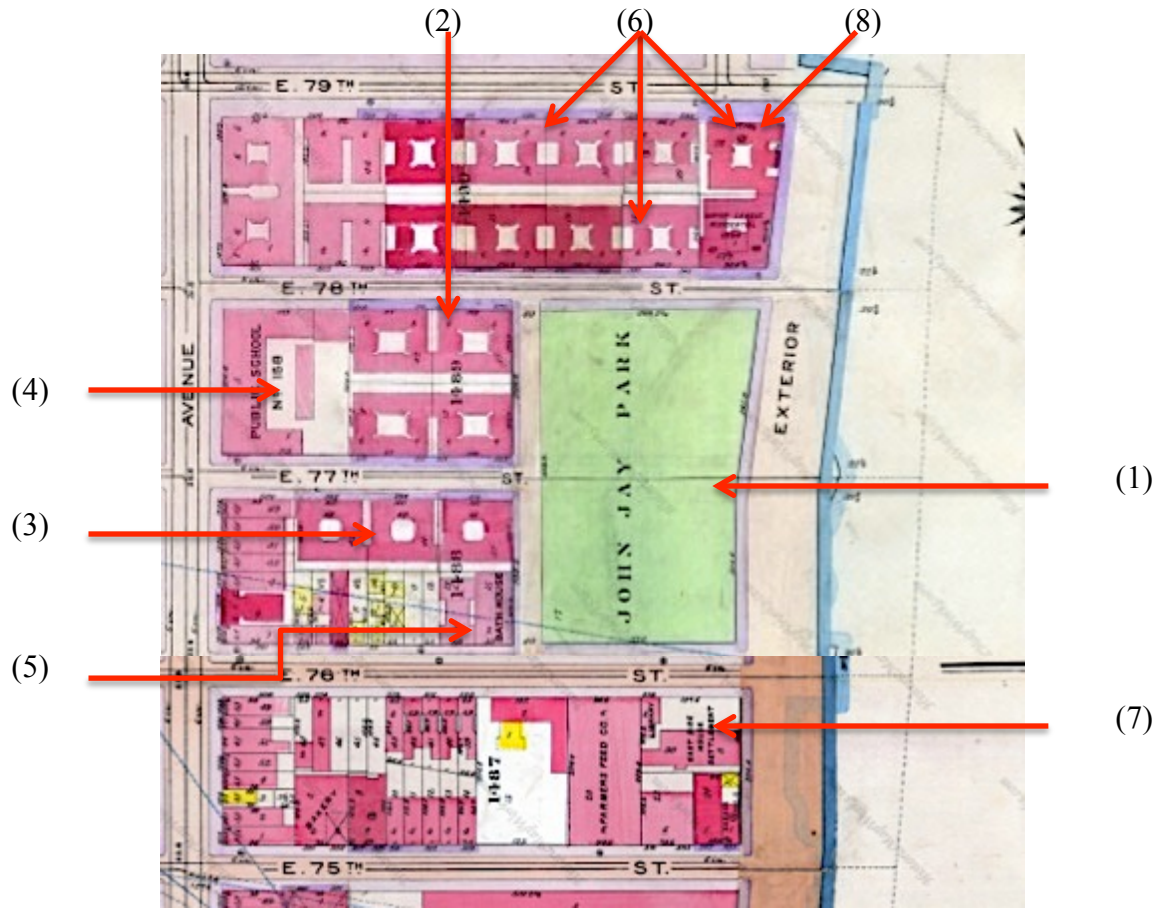
8.11 A Reform Neighborhood

Before New York City acquired the property for John Jay Park, other reform forces were already at work in the neighborhood creating what would become a neighborhood of progressive reform. Historic Preservationist Andrew Dolkart wrote that this park was surrounded by a "web of interconnected housing complexes and public and private institutions … erected at the turn of the century as part of a progressive movement to better the lives of New York's working poor."[2] Included in this network were the City and Suburban Homes Company's York Avenue Estate,

[1] *Annual Report 1914*, Parks Department, City of New York, 31.

[2] Andrew S. Dolkart and Sharon Z. Macosko, *Dream Fulfilled: City and Suburban's York Avenue Estate*, New York: Coalition to Save City and Suburban Housing, Inc., 1988, 18.

the East River Homes (the Shively Sanitary Tenements), the John Jay Houses/Open Stair Company Homes (demolished), Public School 158, the East Side Settlement, New York Public Library's Webster branch and the East 76th Street public bathhouse. [Figure 8.110]



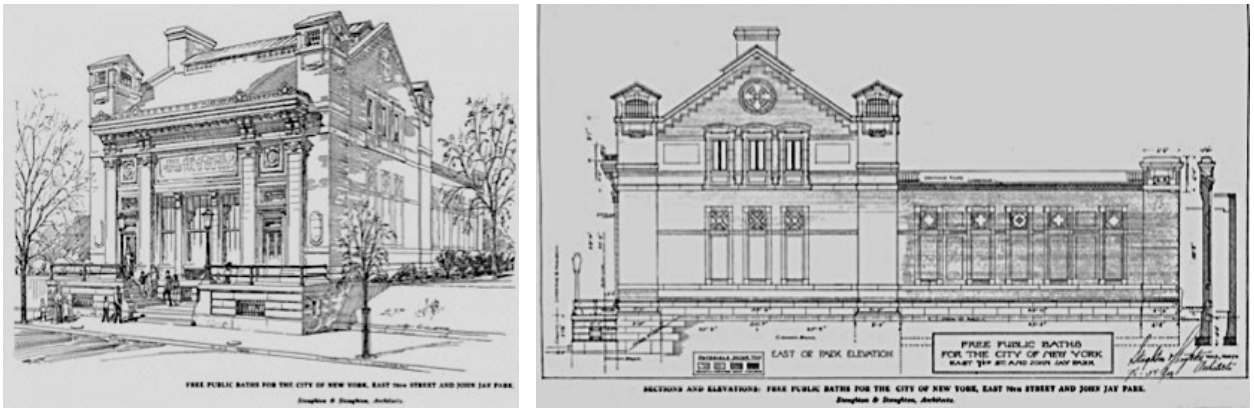
[Figure 8.110] A reform neighborhood: John Jay Park (1), Shively Sanitary Tenements (2), John Jay Houses (3), Public School (4), Bathhouse (5), City & Suburban Homes (6), East Side Settlement house (7), Junior League House for Working Women (8), *Atlas of the Borough of Manhattan*, G.W. Bromley & Co, NY, NY, 1909, revised 1913.

The John Jay Park "Parkland file" notes a bathhouse was built in the park 1906.[3] Built not in, but adjacent to the park, on land that had been condemned and purchased as one of twenty sites for the city's new public bathhouses, this was the seventh bathhouse built in the city.[4] Designed by Stoughton and Stoughton, the two-story brick and limestone structure fronted East

[3] "Parklands File: John Jay Park," Department of Parks, New York City.

[4] For more on public baths in New York, and in America, please see, *Washing the Great Unwashed: Public baths in Urban America*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991, 61

76th Street, while its eastern elevation faced John Jay Park.[5] [Figure 8.111]



[Figure 8.111] East 76th Street Bathhouse: Southeast Elevation and Eastern Elevation, in "Free Public Baths: East 76th & John Jay Park," *American Architect & Building News*, 88:1364, December 16, 1905, 197, 205

In the late 19th and early 20th century, immigrants tended to live and work in areas where they could understand the language spoken near them and where rents were lowest; naturally, enclaves of immigrants with like-heritages developed within the city. The bathhouses and small parks often served one or just a few immigrant groups. The John Jay Park neighborhood in the early 1900s was known as "Little Bohemia," where Czech, Hungarians and Germans lived.[6] While Czechs tended to settle south of East 76th Street, Hungarians clustered in the northeast 70s, and Germans were most prominent in the north 70s and 80th to 88th Streets.[7]

Construction began on the City and Suburban Home Company's York Avenue Estates, the largest model tenement complex in the city, in 1901; the complex filled the block from East 78th to East 79th, Avenue A to the East River.[8] [Figure 8.112] As an extension of the City and Suburban Homes' tenements, but with a different renter in mind, the Junior League sponsored its House for Working Women in the site facing the East river, between East 78th and East 79th

[5] "Free Public Baths," *American Architect and Building News*, 88: 1364, December 16, 1905, 196-200.

[6] "Tammany Hall Versus Reformers," *Washing the Great Unwashed: Public baths in Urban America*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991, 61.

[7] *WPA Guide to New York City*, 249-9.

[8] "Model Tenements: A Brief Account of Model Tenements – Borough of Manhattan," *Eighth Report of Tenement Committee, 1915-16*, 55.

Street. [Figure 8.113] In addition to the features of the model tenements next door, this building had river front balconies, a large common dining room, sewing rooms, and a piano, while on the roof were basketball and tennis courts.[9] Designed by Harde & Short, Percy Griffin and Philip H. Ohm, the City and Suburban Homes were designated a landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1990.[10]

[Figure 8.112] City & Suburban Homes, ahead; Shively Sanitary Tenements, left. Photo: J. Frazer

[Figure 7.113] "A Model Hotel for Working Girls Alexander, Harriet, "Helping Girls to Help Girls," *The Independent*, March 30, 1914, 452.

To the park's west, Architect Henry Atterbury Smith, with counsel by Dr. Henry L. Shively, Chief of New York's Presbyterian Hospital's Tuberculosis Clinic, designed and built the East River Houses in 1912. Nick-named the "Sively Sanitary Tenements," the four buildings sited between East 77th and East 78th Streets, the park and Avenue A, were sponsored by Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt to provide sanitary homes for tuberculosis patients and their families.[11] The apartments had triple sash windows, iron and Guastavino tiled balconies, large interior corridors, and open air stairs.[12] [Figure 8.114] The "Shively Sanitary Tenements," now the

[9] Christopher Gray, "East Side Women's Hotel Built Among the Tenements," *New York Times*, 1988.

[10] Gale Harris, *City and Suburban Homes Company, Avenue A Estate*, Landmark Preservation Commission, Designation List 224, LP-1694, April 24, 1990.

[11] "A Million Dollar Rampart Against the White Plague," *New York Times*, November 21, 1909

[12] Ibid

Cherokee Apartments, were designated a city landmark in 1985."[13] Across the street, on the south side of East 77th Street, Smith designed a second model tenement, named the "John Jay Dwellings, this time for the Open Stair Company."[14] Like the other model tenements, the focus on their design was access to light, even in interior rooms, air circulation and fire safety. Smith tried to minimize interior passages while giving each apartment its own exterior entrance.[15]

[Figure 8.114] Entrance & iron work; Interior courtyards, Guastavino Tiles; Triple sash windows, balconies. "The Shively Sanitary Tenements," 517 E 77th St. photos: John Massengale, Massengale.typepad.com

Concerned that traffic coming east on East 77th Street would dead end into the park causing traffic issues for her new model tenements, Mrs. Vanderbilt offered to pay the expense to close the portion of East 77th Street located within the park and to open a narrow one-lane street along the park's entire westerly border, between East 76th and East 78th Streets.[16] Three months later, the Board of Estimate and Apportionment filed a new map indicating Mrs. Vanderbilt's request was granted, and the establishment of Cherokee Place.[17] [Figure 8.115].

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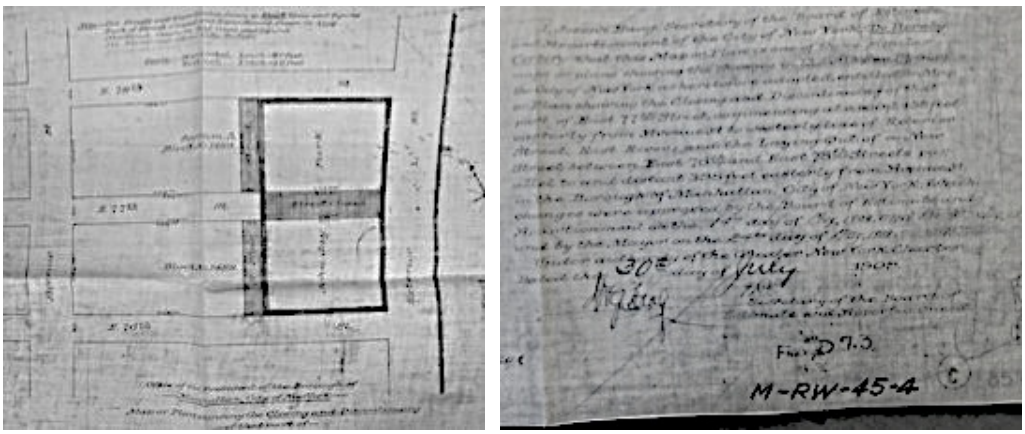
[13] Landmark Preservation Commission, City of New York, "Shively Sanitary Tenements," Landmark Preservation Commission, written by Virginia Kirshan, Designation List 181, LP-1230, July 9, 1895.

[14] *Eighth Report of the Tenement House Department of the City of New York 1915 - 1916,* New York: M.B. Brown Printing & Binding Co, 1917, 56.

[15] Hawson, Jonathan, A., Jr., "Modern Tenement Homes," *Popular Science Monthly,* February 1912, 192-193.

[16] "Mrs. Vanderbilt to Pay to Unite Two Halves of John Jay Park," *New York Times*, April 27, 1909, 10.

[17] Joseph Haag, "Closing and Discontinuing of that Part of East 77th Street," *Parklands Files: John Jay Park*, Parks Department, City of New York, July 30, 1909; and, "Map 8516, Title M-RW-45-4," Cherokee Place, Board of Estimate and Apportionment, *Parklands File: John Jay Park*, Parks Department, City of New York, May 14, 1909.



[Figure 8.115] Joseph Haag, "Closing and Discontinuing of that Part of East 77th Street," *Parklands Files: John Jay Park*, Parks Department, City of New York, July 30, 1909.

Sponsored by the Episcopalian Church, the East Side Settlement house established itself at the site in 1891, opening a new, larger house at 540 East 76th Street in 1902. There, they provided "Germans, Czechs and other ethnic" boys and men with clubs, a playground, a gymnasium, daycare, a kindergarten and music lessons to the neighborhood's male population.[18] Public (elementary) School 158 was built in 1898, before the park or the tenements; just on the other side of the East River Houses. Its playground, sited behing the building and facing east, ensured light from all angles into the neighboring model tenement complexes.[19] The final element of the "Reform Neighborhood" was its first; named for Charles Webster, who donated the library's first building on Boradway at East 76th, the "new" Webster Library, designed in 1906 by Baab, Cook & Willard, has been part of the New York Public Library system ever since.

8.12 Park Plan

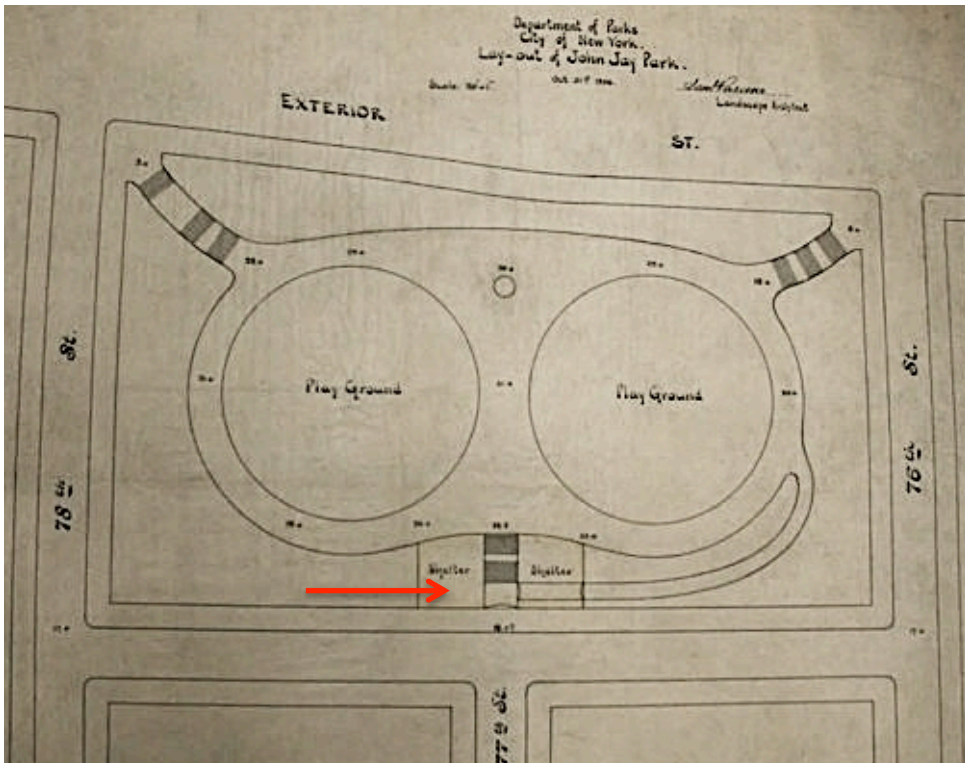
Two different plans of John Jay Park, designed by Samuel Parsons, still exist; both were created before 1911. A later plan of the park was drawn by Charles Downing Lay (Parsons' successor as Landscape Architect), and was co-signed by Parks Commissioner Charles Stover.

[18] Gray, Christopher, Streetscapes: "Look Quick, or Pray for a Traffic Jam," *New York Times*, November 8, 2012; Megan A. Hibbitts, "East Side House Settlement 1851-1991," *The Bronx County Historical Society; Metropolitan New York Library Council Documentary History Project*; The Bronx African American Archival Survey, 2007.

[19] Siegal, Nina, "Journals Solve a School Mystery," *New York Times*, November 28, 1998

When the park opened in 1902, a landscape plan had not yet been created. Twelve years later, with the opening of the new field house, the park seemed a culmination of the interactions of landscape plans over the twelve years. The park's early plans do not indicate East 77th Street within the park, despite the Department's lack of jurisdiction over the road. This suggests their intent to treat the space as part of the park, and follow through on technicalities later.

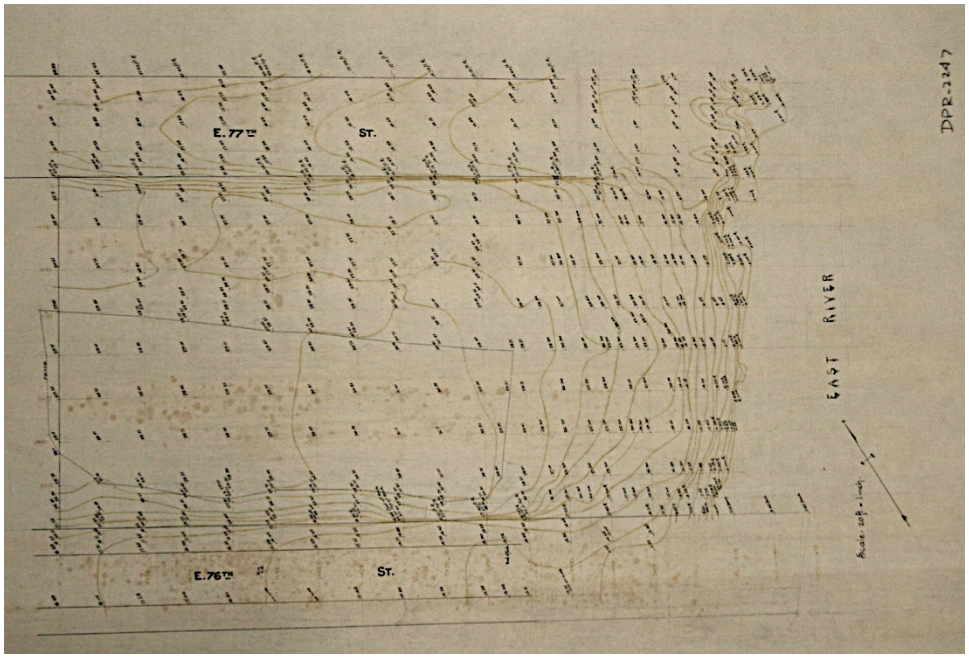
Samuel Parson's earliest design was the simplest, dividing the property at its mid-point. The plan is exclusively for a playground park, with a single set of stairs leading from the western side of the park, and one set of stairs each, leading from the northeast and southeast corners of the park. [Figure 8.120] Parsons' plans include a single ramp that winds from the entry southward, and then east, ending at the eastern side of the park's southern playground. This ramp was probably intended as access for those pushing baby carriages.



[Figure 8.120] Samuel Parsons, "Plan: John Jay Park," October 31, 1906, Municipal Archives, Department of Records, New York City. Note the single ramp with red arrow.

The Parks Department's *1906 Annual Report* notes under its appropriations for Surveys,

Maps and Plans, a "topography map and survey of John Jay Park."[20] The city's Municipal Archives has an undated, unsigned topographical map of John Jay Park; it is likely this report from 1906. Showing only the southern half of the property, from East 76th to East 77th, the topographical map demonstrates the property's dramatic slope. At its most westerly edge, it is over 30'-0" above sea level, but in less than 300 linear feet east, towards the river, the elevation plummets to 0'-0" at its most easterly border. [Figure 8.121] Parsons' initial plans do not incorporate most of the land on the eastern side as such a dramatic slope would not have been conducive to children's playground safety. He sited the playgrounds in the most level area on the property while designing twin sets of ascending stairs leading from the river to the park.

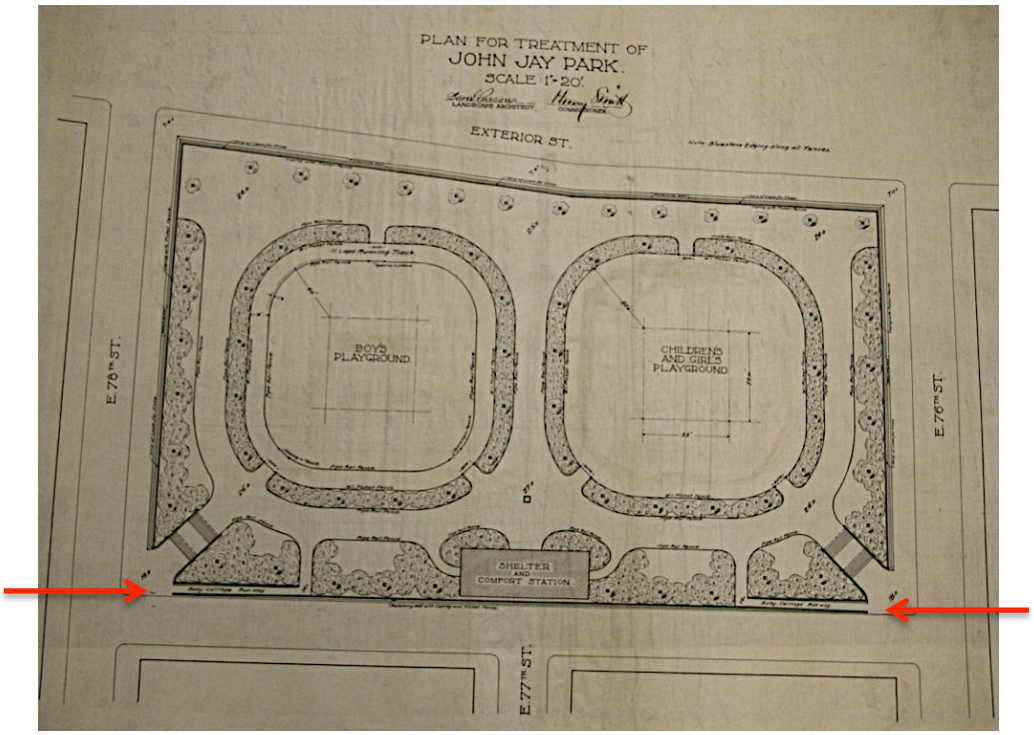


[Figure 8.121] Topographical Survey: John Jay Park 1907, Municipal Archives, Department of Records, New York City.

Parsons next plan of the park includes a retaining wall topped by a fence surrounding the border of the park. [Figure 8.122] This time, he lays out two entry ramps, narrowed considerably from his first example, entering from the northwest and southwest corners. His planting beds

[20] *Annual Report 1906*, Parks Department, New York City, 25.

incorporate shrubbery that may serve to block the view of the neighboring tenements, while an absence of plants at the east side of the park opens up the view of the river from within the park. Parsons' shrubberies are surrounded by fences, on both sides of the shrubs; clearly he meant to keep the children out of the landscaping. The dual playgrounds are still fairly even in size, but now they are labeled "boy's" and "children and girl's"; only the boy's playground has a running track, also surrounded on both sides by a fence. In addition, Parsons includes a shelter and comfort station sited on the western side of the park, inside the fence, at the midpoint between the two blocks. A comfort station was not built at this location in John Jay Park.

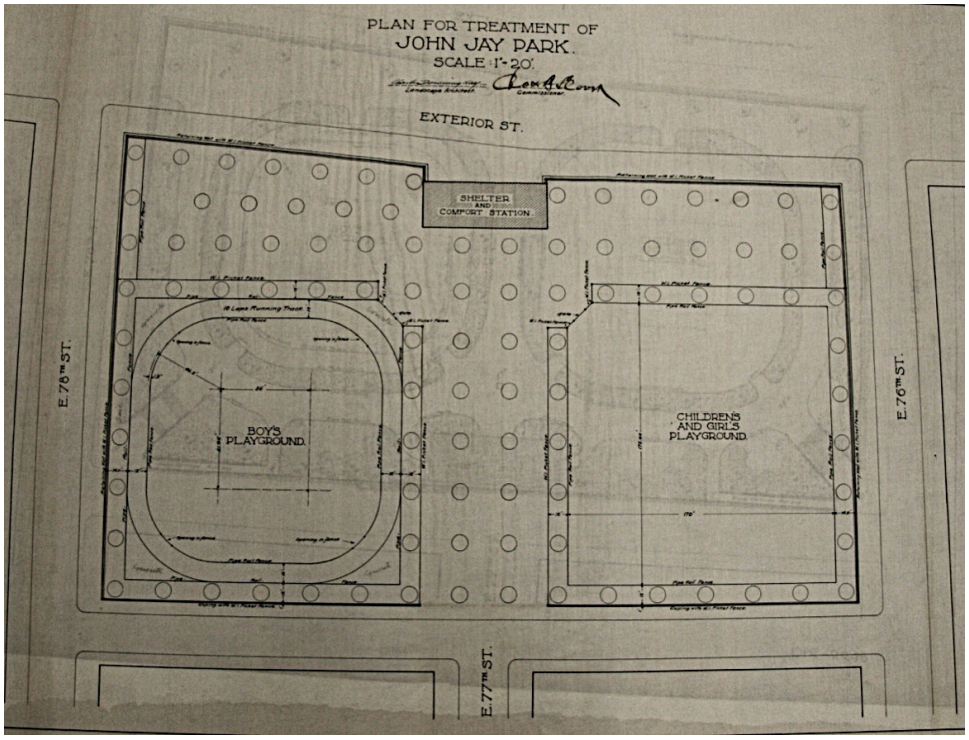


[Figure 8.122] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "Plan: John Jay Park," 1907-1910, Municipal Archives, Department of Records, New York City

Charles Downing Lay, Samuel Parson' successor, designed the next iteration of John Jay Park's plans; Parks Commissioner Charles Stover sign the plan, next to Lay's signature. When a Parks Commissioner signed a park plan, it typically meant that he had given his final approval. However, the Parks Commissioner was not required to sign every park plan before it was

considered approved. Much of the park's plan today closely resembles this last landscape plan; absent photographs of previous park layouts or landscaping, it can be concluded that John Jay Park's plan was a combination of the work of both Lay's and Parson's.

Lay's plan of John Jay Park included Parson's dual playgrounds, but he squared them and pulled them closer to the westerly border. [Figure 8.123] Gone were Parson's access ramps for carriages and sets of stairs; in their place, one entered the park at only one access point: through an allée of trees opposite 77th Street. The boy's playground retained Parson's rounded running track, and all of Parsons' retaining wall and fencing were included, but little of his landscape plan remained. The circles throughout the plan indicate allées of trees, arranged in rectilinear groves; these may be the only plant life that Lay called for in his plan.



[Figure 8.123] Lay, Charles Downing, "Plan: John Jay Park," 1911-13
Municipal Archives, Dept. of Records, New York City

Parsons' undulating planting beds are no longer present. In Parsons' plans, the western, southern and northern perimeter planting beds guide the viewer's eyes away from the city

outside the park, offering the viewer an escape from the city within the park. Parsons' single open allée of trees on the eastern perimeter offered a canopy of shade while incorporating an East River view through and beneath them. Where Parsons sited the pavilion on the western side of his plan, Lay sited it on the eastern elevation, taking advantage of the retaining wall's height by siting most of the pavilion below park grade, recessed into the retaining wall; Lay thereby limited the amount of river view blocked by the pavilion's mass.

8.13 The Field House

By 1914, when the Parks Department formally implemented its landscape plan, John Jay Park had been staffed and running as a playground park for eleven years. Samuel Parsons' stone retaining wall was built surrounding the park on all sides.[Figure 8.130] East 77th Street, as it cut through the park, was closed, Cherokee Place was opened in front of the bathhouse and model tenements on the park's western side. As Parsons' advocated from his earliest drawings, the plan had two playgrounds, one each on the northern and southern halves of the park, segregating boys' and girls' play. 1914 would also be the year that Jaroslav (Jaros) Kraus, the architect for the Parks Department, filed this report concerning a proposed new field house:

> The field house building has been designed to provide toilet facilities … shower baths, locker rooms, and game rooms, both for boys and girls, who are using the large playground between 76th and 78th Streets and the East River. The pavilion on the main floor is arranged for use as a bandstand during the summer months. The pavilion will be closed in the wintertime, and will be equipped with gymnasium apparatus suspended from the trusses. The building is of English gothic design, built of brick trimmed with limestone. It will contain a boiler room, coal room and storeroom in the cellar; toilet facilities, locker room and shower rooms on the basement level, which is partly above and partly below the playground level. The main or pavilion floor is arranged for a large [open] pavilion and four rooms, which are to be used by the attendants, musicians, and for whatever other purposes … in connection with the playground work.[21][Figure 8.131]

[21] *Annual Report 1913*, Department of Parks, 71.

[Figure 8.130] "Stone Support Wall: John Jay Park," photo: Jennifer Frazer

[Figure 8.131] "Field House: John Jay Park," *Annual report, Department of Parks, 1914*, 29.

Sited on the midpoint of the park's eastern elevation on Exterior Street, its rear elevation facing the East River, the main floor of Kraus's field house had tall open-air gothic arches while its side wings, symmetrically flank the center section, had glazed windows.[Figure 8.132, 8.133]

[Figure 8.132] Pavilion, John Jay Park, 1914, Photo: Museum of the City of NY, 1915

[Figure 8.133] Pavilion, John Jay Park, 1914, Photo: Museum of the City of NY, 1915

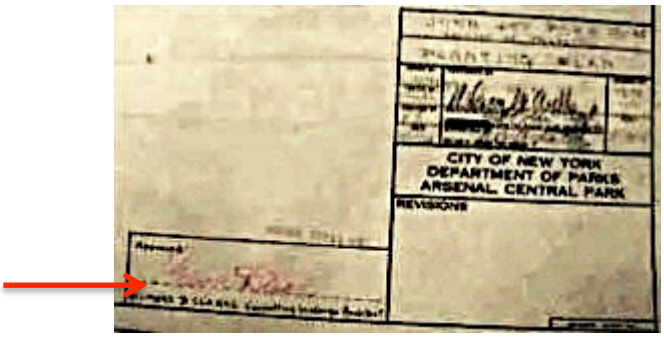
By 1920, city atlases would reflect the implementation of the plan and field house in John Jay Park, with the Cherokee Place along the park's western border, and the continuation of the separate playgrounds with a running track on the boy's side.[Figure 8.134]

[Figure 8.134] John Jay Park, *Atlas of the Borough of Manhattan*, G.W. Bromley & C0, NY, NY, 1921

In a sensitive 1941 remodeling, Aymar Embury II designed glazing for the open-air arches in order to transform the field house into a year-round facility.[22] At this time, he removed the front stairs, redirecting pedestrian traffic from the building's front elevation to its side doors on its northern and southern elevations. In 1939 and 1941, Embury created some important additions for John Jay Park. He designed many of Moses' fifteen new pools and bathhouses of

[22] *Parks History Files: John Jay Park*, Department of Parks, City of New York, undated.

the 1930's when Commmissioner Moses used Works Progress Adminstration funds to make improvements in the city's parks. Even small John Jay Park received a pool using these funds, and the park's plans from the 1930s and 1940s bear the signatures of both Embury and Consulting landscape architect Gilmore Clarke. A swimming pool was constructed in the northeast corner of the park in 1939 and two years later, a diving pool was added at the mid-point along the park's northern wall. Embury designed both of these pools, while a 1935 Plantings Plan bears Clarke's signature. [Figure 8.134]

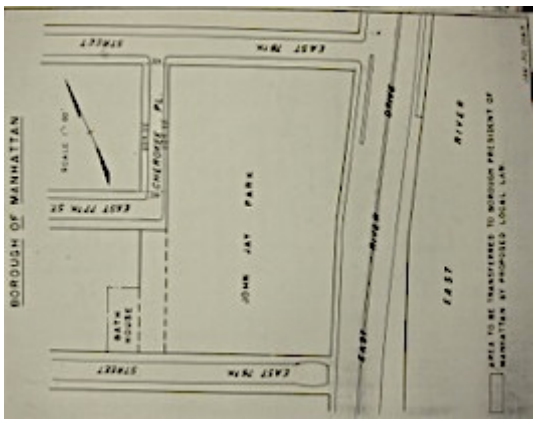


[Figure 8.134] Gilmore Clarke, "Planting Plan: John Jay Park," Consulting Landscape Architect, 1935, Maps Archives, Department of Parks, New York City.

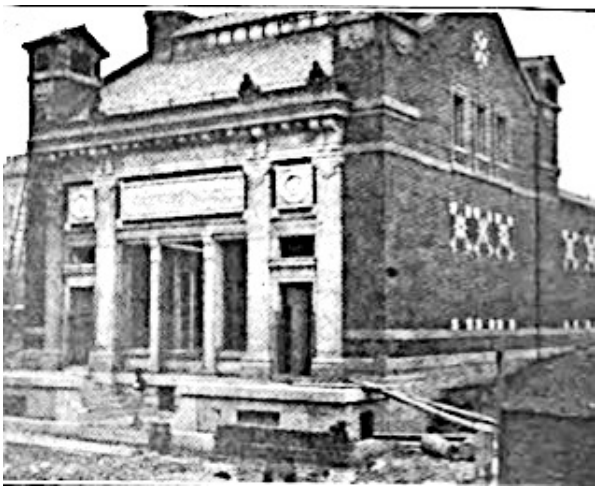
An ensuing 1942 transfer of the East 76th Street Bathhouse from the city to the Parks Department generated a few ideas from Embury on the formal integration of the old bathhouse into the Park. First, the city agreed to close the southern half of Cherokee Place, between East 77th Street and East 76th Street, and to transfer the property to the Parks Department as an addition to John Jay Park.[23] [Figure 8.135] In an attempt to convert the bathhouse into a recreation center for the park, Embury redesigned it. [Figure 8.136, 8.137] The renovation was announced in a 1941 press release in which the new Recreation Building was described as having a large recreation room, a gymnasium and an auditorium.[24] However, for undiscovered reasons, the renovation did not occur, and instead, the bathhouse was razed in 1945.

[23] *Parklands File: John Jay Park*, Parks Department, City of New York, March 19, 1942.

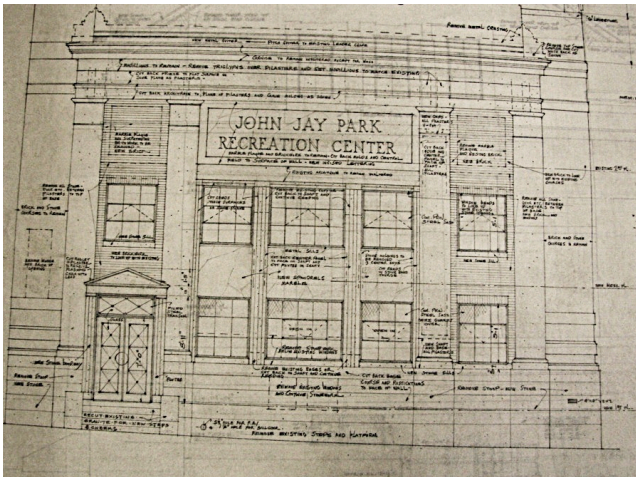
[24] *Parks History Files: John Jay Park*, Department of Parks, City of New York, May 30, 1941. This file does not indicate who gave the press release, but most often, it was the Commissioner or a representative from his office.



[Figure 8.135] Addition to John Jay Park of Bathhhouse and Southern Segment of Cherokee Place, *Parks History Files: John Jay Park*, Department of Parks, City of New York, January 30, 1945.



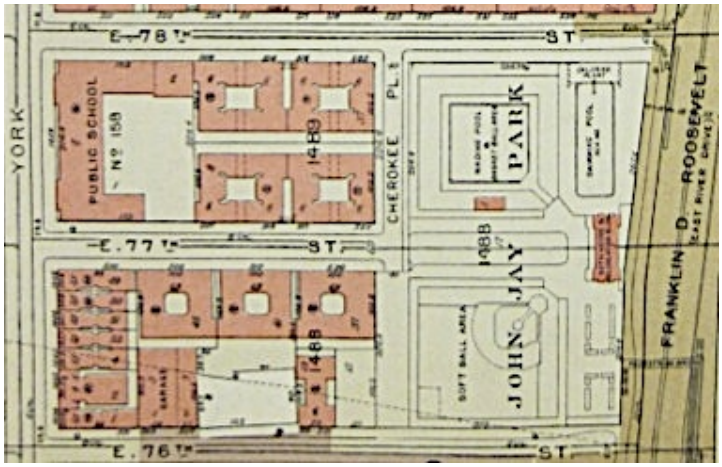
[Figure 8.136] Southeastern Elevation, East 76th st Bath, Stoughton & Stoughton, Architects, "Free Public Baths," *American Architect and Building News*, 88: 1364, December 16, 1905, 196-200



Re-design of 1906 Bathhouse [Figure 8.137] Aymar Embury II, MA-45-704Maps Archives, Department of Parks, New York City, February 25, 1941.

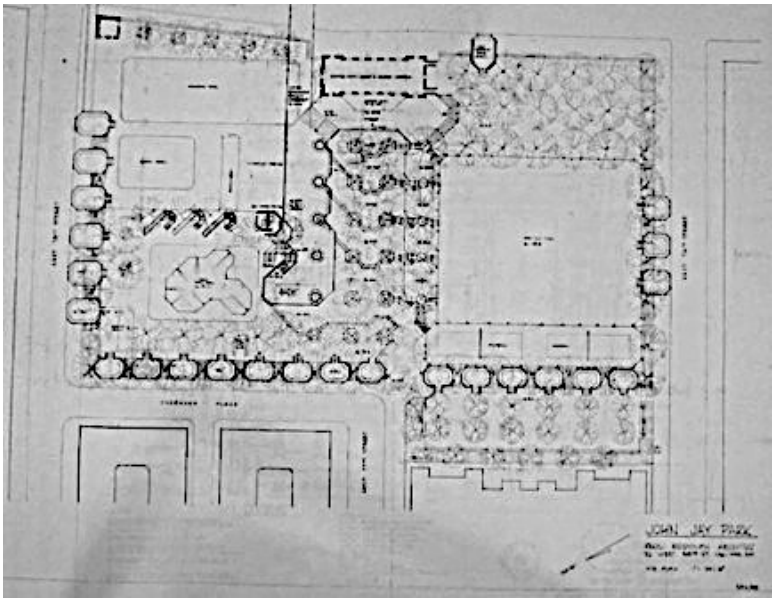
A 1955 city Atlas indicates that the transfer of bathhouse and Cherokee Place to the Parks Department, as well as the subsequent removal of the bathhouse from the park site, were complete. It also shows that the park's southern portion had become a softball field and the northern portion had acquired a pool and a convertible wading pool and basketball court. [Figure 8.138] After the demolition of the bathhouse, the space was landscaped and included as an addition to the park, while set-aside as a separate space. The landscape plans for this part of the park, submitted over time, generally include permanent seating areas, and occasionally included sculpture gardens, as it does currently. A 1968 plan by Paul Rudolph, which was not built, called

for an allée of trees and little pods of either seating or play areas in the former bathhouse/south Cherokee Place area as well as along the inside of the northern park perimeter. [Figure 8.139] Rudolph's proposal appeared to also call for cantilevered terraces extending from the north elevations of the field house and the park. [Figure 8.1300]



[Figure 8.138] 1955 John Jay Park, *Manhattan Land Book*, G.W. Bromley & Co, New York, NY

[Figure 8.139] Paul Rudolph, *Section, Looking East: John Jay Park*, M-L-45-10, Sheet 5, Maps Archives, Olmstead Center, Department of Parks, City of New York, March 26, 1968.

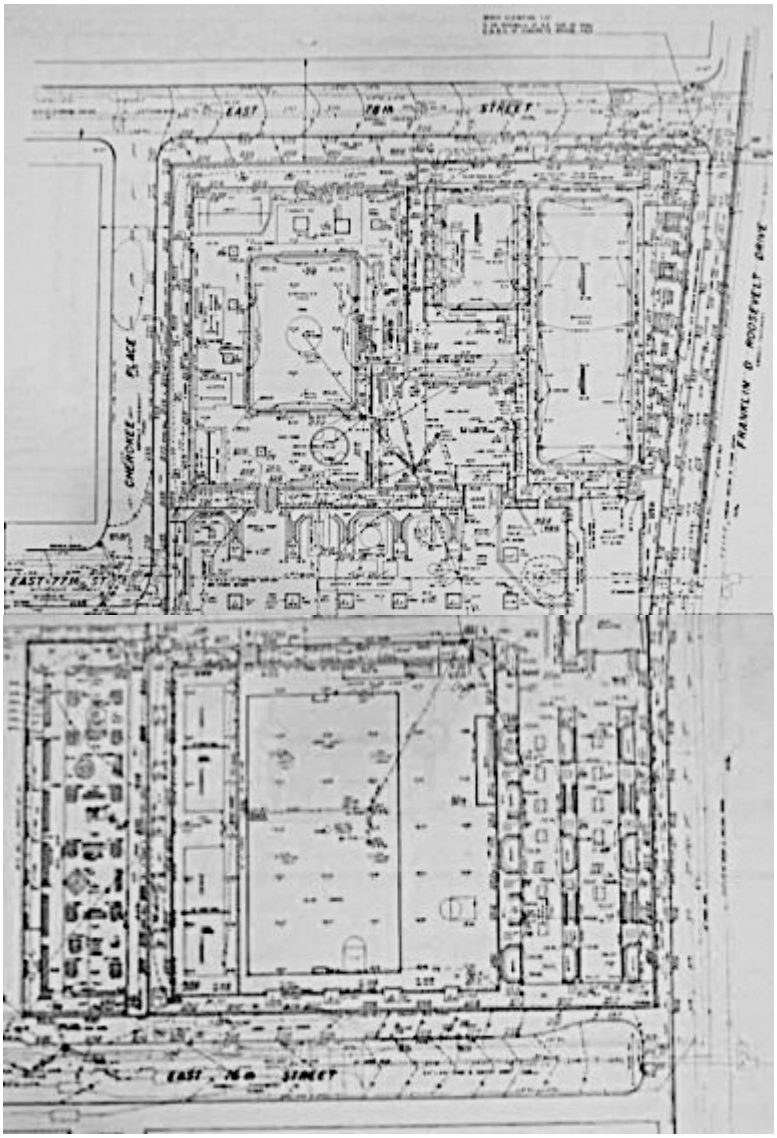


[8.1300] Paul Rudolph, *Site Plan: John Jay Park*, M-L-45-10, Maps Archives, Olmstead Center, Department of Parks, City of New York, March 26, 1968.

No record was located indicating why Rudolph submitted this plan to the Parks Department, or why he was not hired to implement his plan. But, a 1967 *Architectural Record* article by Arthur Rosenblatt, a Deputy Administrator in the Parks Department's Office of Recreation and Cultural Affairs, discusses former Parks Commissioner Thomas Hoving's invitation to the city's architects and landscape architects to help make over the city's parks as places that people would feel comfortable using.[25] Given that Rudolph's plan is dated only one year later, it may well have been his answer to Hoving's call to participate in the improvement of the city's parks. Even though Rudolph's proposal was not built by the Parks Department, a 1981 topographical survey indicates that some of Rudolph's ideas may have been incorporated into the park by the Parks Department anyway. [Figure 8.1301] Specifically, there are some similarities between the little pods of play or seating areas in Rudolph's plan and the Parks Department's plan. In the Parks Department's version, they are used in the park's center allée of trees and in the southeastern quadrant of the park.

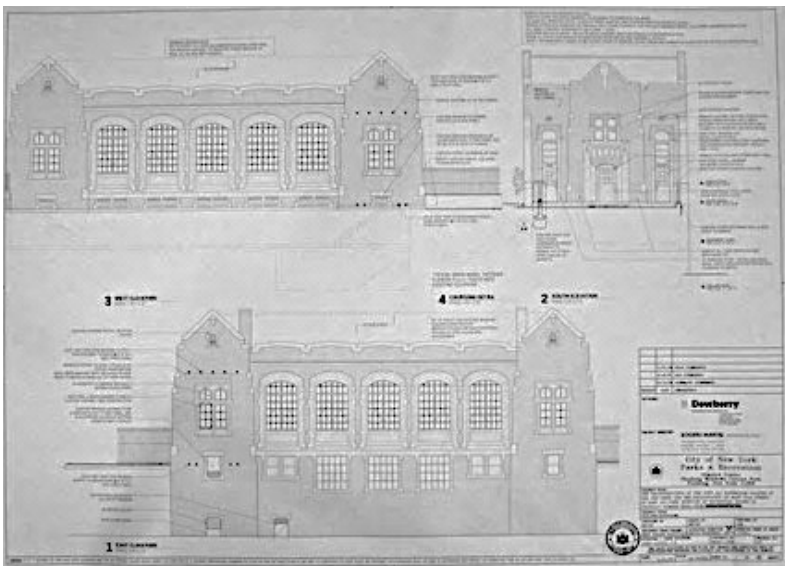
Note in the topographical map that the baseball field that appeared in the 1955 atlas is no longer present in the southern half of the park. [Figure 8.138] In its place are basketball and handball courts. This map shows in the northern half of the park, the diving pool, the swimming pool and the basketball court/wading pool combination. By the 1940's and 1950s, this park had become a recreation park for all ages, not just a playground for children.

[25] Arthur Rosenblatt, "Open Space Design: New York Shows How in its Park Program," *Architectural Record*, August, 1967,114.



[Figure 8.1301] *Topography Map: John Jay Park*, M-T-45-104, Sheets 1 & 2, Maps Archives, Olmstead Center, Department of Parks, City of New York, October 8, 1981.

Rogers Marvel Architects of New York City conducted a careful restoration of the field house in 2003. [Figure 8.1302] They used existing materials where ever they could, and when needed, they were careful to use only replacement materials that were from the period in which this building was built: bricks, limestone, cast stone, and steel-frame windows.[Figure 8.1303 a,b] In 2014, this building will have stood for one hundred years; with the exception of its windows and the removal of the central entrance and stairs, it is quite close to its original form from 1914.



[Figure 8.1302] Rogers and Marvel Architects, Renovation Project, John Jay Park

[Figure 8.1303a] Pavilion: John Jay Park, 2012. Photo: Jennifer Frazer

[Figure 8.1303b] Pavilion: John Jay Park, 2012. Photo: Jennifer Frazer

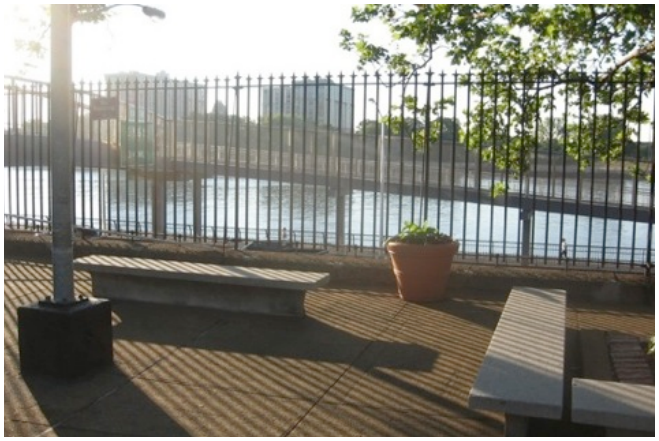
8.14 Conclusion

John Jay Park has a remarkable history. Surrounded by landmarked model tenements, sited on what has become a property with stunning views of the East River, fitted with ninety-nine year old pavilion in beautiful condition, the park itself sits on its own raised plinth of original masonry walls and soil, the center of neighborhood of reform and a monument to the notion of letting the light in.

There are several elements in John Jay Park worthy of preservation, certainly, and some worthy of designation. The field house designed by Jaroslave Kraus is worthy of designation. Designed by a architect who studied at Cooper Union and then devoted his life's work to municipal and then state structures, his field house was a rare example of restraint and dignity in a time of "ennobling" architecture, and as such, has lasted through all these years.

Parson's stone wall, and the fencing atop it that is still original, are integral to the park and worthy of preservation. Without that stone wall, the park would be enormously different.

Embury's 1935 pool has long been a beloved fixture in this park. It is hard to imagine a future Parks administration that would not want to preserve it, or at least a pool, in that location in the park. It is perhaps one of the prettiest locations to swim in the entire city.



8.2 William H. Seward Park

As the first municipal playground in the United States when it opened in 1903, William H. Seward Park was Samuel Parsons' first small park in which he incorporated both playground and landscape into his park plan. Located in the city's most densely populated ward, the tenth ward, where many of the tenements did not have bathing facilities, this park included a public bath on the lower level of its pavilion. Bordered by Canal, Essex, Rutgers, Hester, Suffolk, Division, Jefferson Streets and East Broadway, Seward Park's 2.65 acres of land were acquired by the city, in 1897 for $1,811,127.00. The neighborhood residents were predominantly Jewish immigrants from Eastern European countries. As indicated in the opening paragraph of this thesis, this was a very popular park. Because so many children and adults used the park and the bathhouse, Parsons had a difficult challenge preventing them from trampling the landscape.

In its 1897 report, the Committee on Small Parks described the tenth ward as "notoriously the worst specimen of city crowding in the world." With a total acreage of just 109 acres, the population in the ward, as of 1897, was 70,168; an average of 643.8 people lived in each acre. The committee noted the pushcart markets of Hester and Ludlow Streets; given the population, pushcart markets made navigating the streets a challenge. [Figure 8.200 a, b]

[Figure 8.200a] Seward Park site
1885 Robinson's Atlas, wards 7 &10

[Figure 8.200b] New York's Ghetto Market: Essex, Hester and Suffolk Streets, *King's Views of New York City*, 1903

Within just nine years of opening, Seward Park would be bordered by several structures built to serve the neighborhood's growing Jewish population. North of the park was Public School 62 (1905); on its east, New York Public Library's Seward Park branch (1909); to the southeast was the Educational Alliance, the Yiddish Daily Newspaper building, the *Forward,* was south (1912) and southwest of the park was the Jacob Schiff Fountain (1895). [Figure 8.201]

[Figure 8.201] Educational Alliance
Official Souvenir of the Fair:
Educational Alliance & Hebrew Technical Institute
New York: De Leeuw & Oppenheimer, 1895, 11.

Daily Forward 1912
Daytonian in Manhattan.com

Seward Park Branch 1909
Annual Report of the Director
Architects: Babb, Cook & Welch
New York Public Library, 1910, 108.

Lauded as the largest public school ever built, Public School 62 was designed in 1905 by New York City's Superintendent of School Buildings (1891 to 1923), architect Charles B. J. Snyder. The six-story classically-designed school house had four elevators and separate entrances for boys and girls, which created two schools within one structure. With 2,635,850 cubic feet of space, a capacity for forty-five hundred pupils, one hundred and twenty four teachers and two principals, the school's price tag was $1,037,049.[1] [Figure 8.202, 8.203]

In 1895, banker Jacob Schiff hired Arnold Brunner, the architect who would later design Seward Park's pavilion, to design an elegant fountain for the people in the Lower East Side neighborhood. [Figure 8.204] In 1891, Schiff and other wealthy German-Jewish philanthropists sponsored the construction of Brunner's Hebrew Institute, designed for the Educational Alliance.

[1] "Greater New York Activities: Largest School in the World," *The Chautauquan,* XXXVIII: 6, February 1904, 598.

[Figure 8.202] Main Entrance and Portico, P.S. 62
American Architect & Building News 93:1674, January 25, 1908

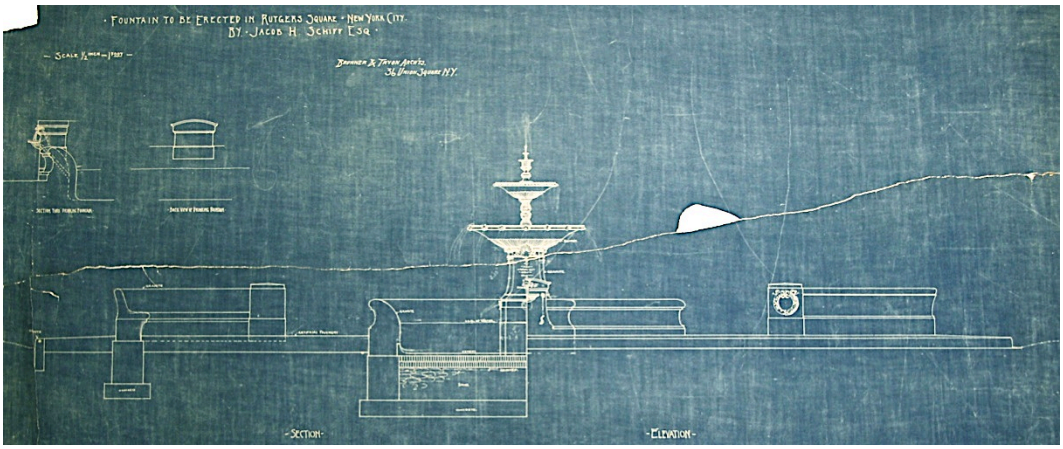
[Figure 8.203] Children exiting Public School 62
Bain Collection, Library of Congress, 1910

Brunner's fountain, including the semi-circular granite benches that surround it, has a radius of sixty feet. The fountain's granite base is set on an eight-inch circular platform. On the fountain's north and south elevations are sited the semi-circular benches, and on its west and east elevations are attached bronze drinking fountains with granite basins. The fountain sits atop a rectangular stone column ornamented with bronze marine shells and dolphins. Two tiered bronze basins are held in place over the granite circular base by an ornate bronze finial attached at its base to the rectangular granite column. The upper bronze basin has a ten-foot diameter, while the lower bronze basin has a diameter of twenty-two feet. An inscription on the fountain indicates that it was given to the city in 1895, but does not indicate the donor. It surprised no one at the time to discover that the gift was from Jacob Schiff, who was often quite generous in his efforts to help the Jewish immigrants of the Lower East Side. A second inscription on the fountain sited a verse from Exodus Seventeen, Verse Six: "And there shall come water out of it that the people may drink."[2]

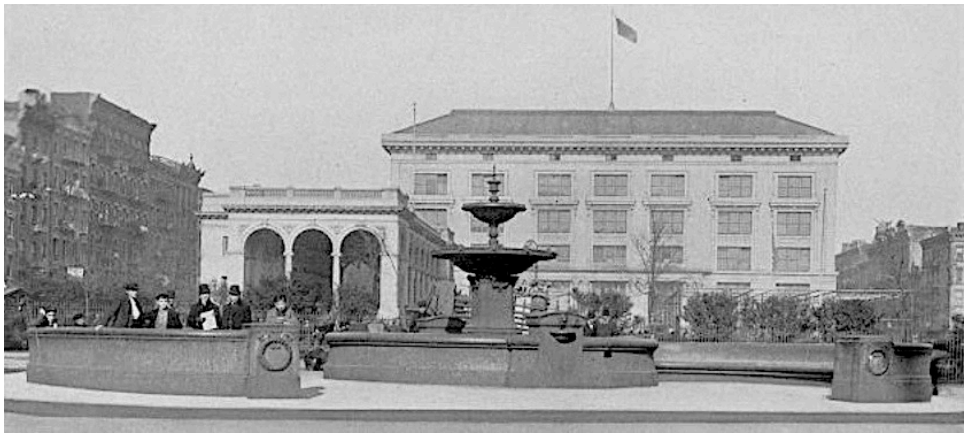
Today, the fountain is in disrepair, but not beyond rehabilitation. One drinking fountain is missing, and the other is broken off; the upper bronze basin and the supporting bronze finial are missing. The fountain's granite base and benches are in fairly good condition, but some of the

[2] "A New Eastside Fountain," *The Critic*, 24: 700, July 20, 1895, 45.

bronze components will have to be recast and the extant bronze elements repaired and preserved. We are fortunate because New York City's Department of Records has Brunner's original drawings of this fountain in its archives. [Figure 8.205, 8.206, 8.207]



[Figure 8.205] Section & Elevation: Fountain to be erected in Rutgers Square for Jacob H. Schiff, Esq.; Arnold Brunner, Architect, 1895. Department of Records, New York City.



[Figure 8.206] Schiff Fountain 1905; Rutgers Square; with Pavilion & P.S. 62. Photo: New York Public Library

[Figure 8.207] Jacob H. Schiff 1899
Moses King, *Notable New Yorkers, 198.*

Schiff Fountain today.
Photo: J. Frazer

Schiff Fountain 1980s
Parks Department, City of New York

8.21 Park Plan

Seward Park opened in October 1903. The Parks Department had obtained the property by 1897, but because the land was so expensive, they had to wait to improve it as a park. In 1899, the Outdoor Recreation League (ORL, led by Charles Stover) asked for, and was granted, permission from the Parks Department, to install a playground on the future park site. Using primarily the northern section of the park, they raised the money, paid for, installed and then, managed the very popular neighborhood playground. The ORL acted in part, to bring a healthier alternative to street play for the neighborhood children, but also in part, to further pressure the Parks Department to include playgrounds in its new small parks' plans. When the Parks department eventually took over the site, they took over the maintenance, care and responsibility of the playground equipment. [Figure 8.210]

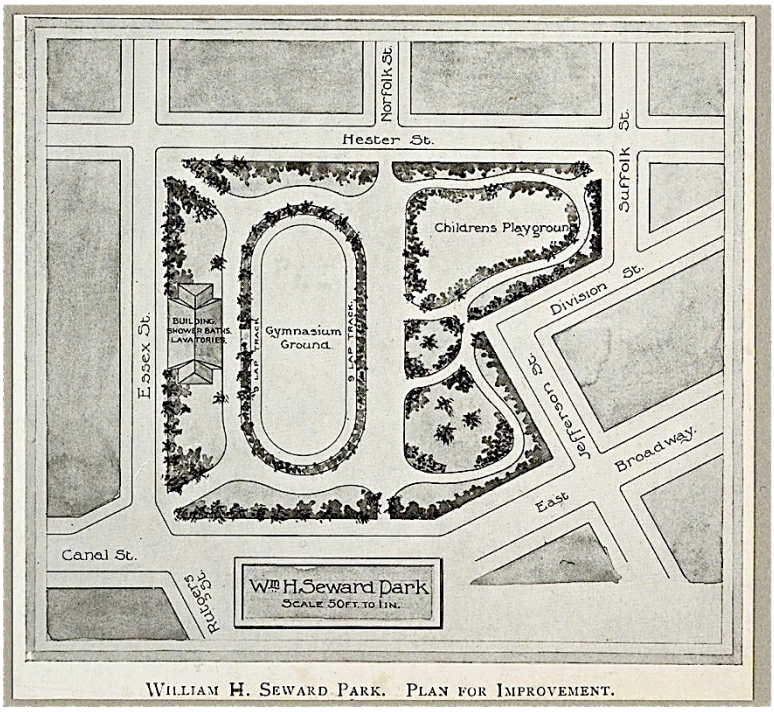
[Figure 8.210] Future Seward Park site: Outdoor Recreation League playground, 1899-1902. Library of Congress

In his 1910 *Landscape Gardening*, on Seward Park, Parsons described the location:

> This spot was a few years ago one of the most congested in New York City. The Tenement Houses, which were cleared to make way for the park, were dilapidated in the extreme. The area is less than three acres, but around it is carried a real park effect of trees, shrubs, and lawns, with a central mall extending from Canal to Hester Street. On one side of this mall is a children's playground with every game and amusement for girls of all sizes. A high fence surrounds it in order to provide every means of protection to the little ones in this crowded part of the city. High fences also surround the exterior

boundary of the park, and around all grass plots are lower fences with pointed crestings to increase somewhat their effectiveness. A double row of trees is planted along the mall.

On the west side of the mall are a large gymnasium and running track, and back of that, adjoining the extreme west boundary, is a handsome building affording music and shelter for the mothers and little ones. Underneath it are many baths for public use. The walks are asphalted and everything is done to protect the park from the persistent stress and wanton destruction of the surrounding mixed population.[3] [Figure 8.211]



[Figure 8.211] Samuel Parsons, Jr., William H. Seward Park: Plan for Improvement 1903, Harvard Art Museums, Division of Photographs

Though the park was opened in October of 1903, the pavilion would not be ready to open to the public until the following July. The "bathing" pavilion opened with a very low key ceremony in front of more than five thousand people, during which Commissioner John Pallas merely "declared the building ready for use," after which he tried to explain to whomever would listen, how things were going to be run at the pavilion.[4]

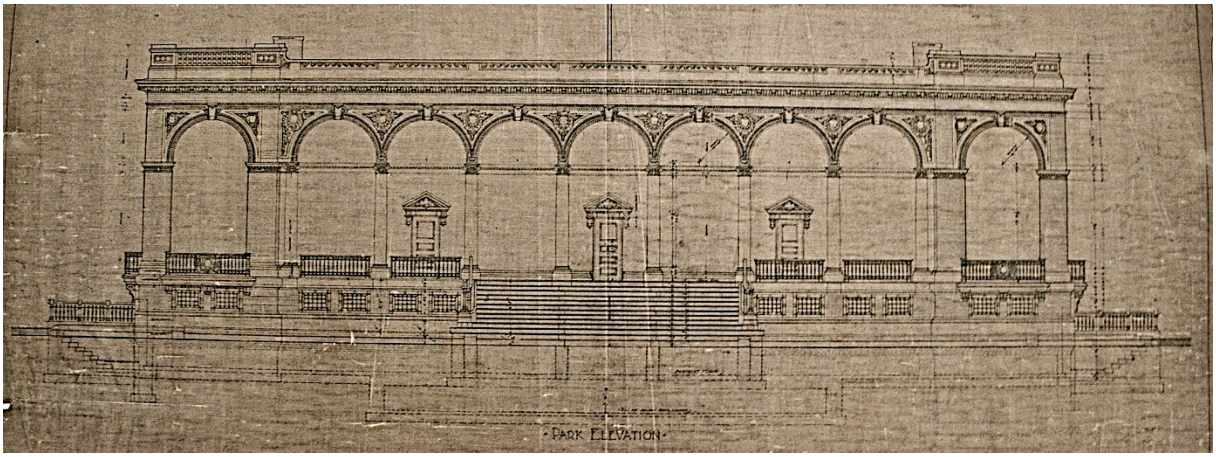
Designed in what one reviewer called the "ionic style," the pavilion is constructed in cream-colored brick with terra cotta ornament. [Figure 8.212, 8.213] The interior had a "liberal

[3] Samuel Parsons, Jr., *Landscape Gardening Studies*, New York: John Lane Company, 1910, 27-28.

[4] "First Public Bath Opened in Seward Park," *New York Times*, July 2, 1904.

use of marble," with enameled zinc bathtubs, and nickel-plated plumbing that was "the most modern and up to date." The shower knobs had anti-scalding controls so that the water could not get too hot or too cold. With room for up to fifty-one persons to bathe at one time, the Parks Department estimated that at least 2500 people would be able to bathe in the building daily.[5]

[Figure 8.212] Pavilion: William H. Seward Park, 1934, Photo Archives, Department of Parks, City of New York



[Figure 8.213] Park Elevation: William H. Seward Park, Arnold W. Brunner, Architect Department of Records, City of New York, 1903.

Arnold Brunner's classical temple design for the park's bathhouse pavilion was consistent with his own architectural aesthetic and preference of classical forms. In addition, using a temple form for a public bathhouse pavilion aligned with the goals of the city beautiful

[5] First Public Bath opened in Seward Park, New York Times, July 2, 1904.

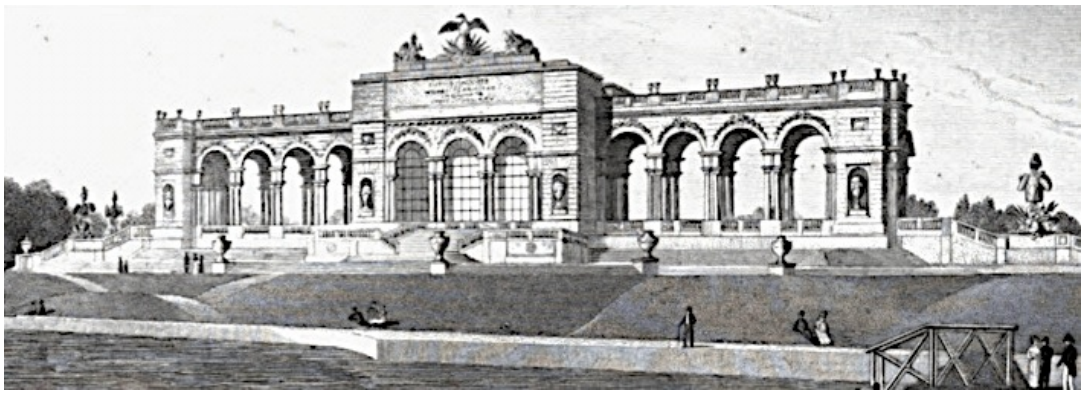
movement, in which municipal buildings were designed as lofty instruments intended to ennoble those who experienced them. Given that this was Brunner's third structure within a two-block radius, and that all three structures were intended to improve the lives of the mostly Jewish immigrant poor who lived in the neighborhood, one can safely conclude that Brunner was using his talents in an effort to encourage Jewish immigrants to aspire to be their best as new Americans. As one of the country's first successful Jewish architects, Brunner championed classicism as the appropriate architectural style for reform Jewish Americans' secular and religious buildings. A key goal of Brunner's clientele was their effort to assimilate in their new country while establishing their own Jewish identity, separate of their heritage.[6]

Brunner's parents were both Jewish immigrants; his mother, Isabella Solomon, came from a distinguished British family. His father, William Brunner, was born in 1823 Tyrol, nine years after the Congress of Vienna, in which Tyrol was returned to Austria as part of the Austrian Empire. Though the elder Brunner moved to America at a young age, he must have shared the stories of his childhood with his son. After the younger Brunner graduated from college, he travelled extensively through Europe, including a visit to Vienna, and there sketched all the buildings and structures that interested him.

One such building, the "Gloriette" at the Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna (Unesco World Heritage site, 1996), must have caught Brunner's eye, because his pavilion in Seward Park bears a striking resemblance to it. [Figure 8.214] Built in 1775, to honor both the co-regent Maria Theresa and her eldest son, Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II, it was a classical open-air pavilion, sited in a high elevation of the palace gardens' landscape, where those who stood within it could view the land in any direction. As a symbol of Joseph II, who was the only European ruler of his

[6] Samuel D. Gruber, "Arnold W. Brunner and the New Classical Synagogue in America" *Jewish History,* 25:1, 2011, 70-71.

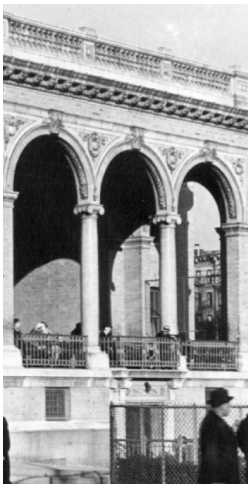
era to promote religious tolerance and secular education, the Seward Park pavilion might have been quite welcome in the tenth ward for more than just its showers. Perhaps Brunner's intention in his pavilion design was not only to ennoble, but also to honor and promote tolerance.

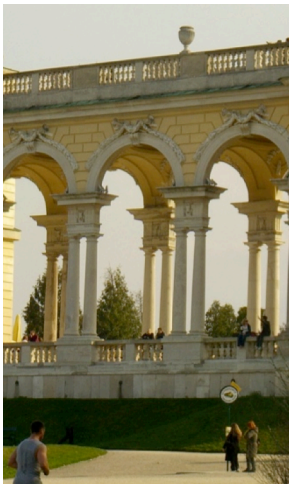


[Figure 8.214] La Gloriette: Schönbrunn Gardens, *European Scenery: Drawings by Captain Batty of the Grenadier Guards*, R.R.S., 1825, plate 39

Like the Seward Park pavilion, the Gloriette was a tall, two-story, open-air, flat-roofed loggia with colonnaded arcade encircling the structure; Seward Park pavilion had a three-elevation arcade, while the Hester Street elevation was walled in to provide office space and mother's stations. The columns in the Gloriette were doubled-Doric, while the pavilion's columns were single-Ionic, with volutes from which the semi-circular arches sprung. Both structures were ornamented at each arch's keystone, the Gloriette's ornamentation was in stone, and the pavilion's was terracotta. Both had balustraded roofs, and both had balustrades at their colonnades' bases, while Brunner's voussoirs, spandrels and entablature were ornamented with what appears to be wreaths and garlands, also in terracotta. The Gloriette's centerpiece, its glazed triumphal arch, was absent in Brunner's pared down version at Seward Park, but both structures were built on raised plinths under which a basement level was constructed; because of the raised main floor, windows provided natural light to the pavilion's basement.[7] [Figure 8,215]

[7] Brunner added an unglazed triumphal arch to the center of his very similar design for the Thomas Jefferson Park pavilion bathhouse in 1905. See: Russell Sturgis, "Pavilions in the New York Parks," *Architectural Record*, 17, March 1905, 252.



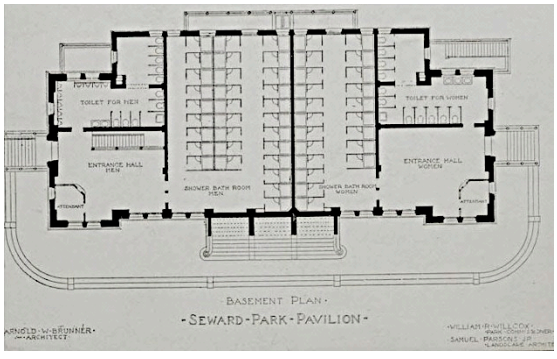


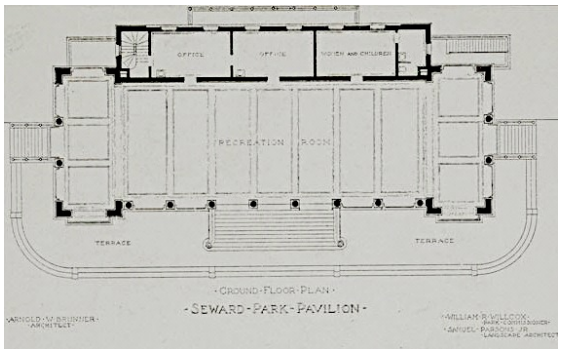
[Figure 8.215] Pavilion: detail 1934, Photo Archives Department of Parks, City of New York

Gloriette: Schönbrunn Palace Garden http://www.schoenbrunn.at

Gloriette: Detail Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna Photo: Philipp Mayer

The Pavilion's basement level concealed underground comfort stations and over fifty showers for both men and women. [Figure 8.216] Despite its lofty materials, temperature controlled showers and modern plumbing, the pavilion revealed major defects after only four days of use. Blaming the problems on the people who used the baths, the Parks Department claimed that though "ignorance and carelessness, the people who have used the baths have damaged some of the mechanism so that it will be necessary to spend a considerable amount on their repair." Apparently, many of the temperature controlling handles had been wrenched off of their connections, and the pipes to which they were connected had been pulled out of the walls.[8]





[Figure 8.216] Basement & Ground Floor Plans: Seward Park Pavilion 1903, Arnold Brunner, Architect, Harvard Art Museums, Division of Photographs

[8] "Closed Public Bath a Week After Opening in Seward Park," *New York Times*, July 19, 1904

The problem with the pavilion was part, in its construction or design, and part in its use. The bathhouse saw immediate heavy use when it opened, with lines of up to two hundred people waiting to use it at any hour of the day. Those inside were warned not to use too much water or the water might overflow. Because they couldn't get the baths to drain efficiently, some of the boys in the neighborhood went so far as to cut the pipes! The pavilion was not designed or built to withstand the amount of use or abuse it quickly endured. Drainage pipe drops installed were too small and soon became backed up when the baths were in full use. The water would then overflow and run into the basement's engine room where it threatened to put out the fires that heated the water, as well as, more importantly, to destroy the boiler. The Parks Department closed the building and announced that a considerable portion of the building's interior would have to be ripped out in order to enlarge and correct every drainage problem.[9]

Soon, negative responses to the park and bathhouse users by the Parks Department and the press were printed in articles are reports on the park. Parsons was no exception:

> This park, though quite small, probably cost more than any other park ever built…but, shrubbery cannot be kept because of the boys who destroy through mere vandalism. Sometimes three or four rowdies come in and start to threaten some laborer working, just out of pure wantonness, and if there is not a policeman around it goes hard with the laborer. Thieves come in there too. It is a bad neighborhood; I don't suppose there is much worse. As for criminals, they overrun the neighborhood at times.[10]

Once Public School 62 opened on the corner of Hester and Essex Streets, the children literally poured out of the school's three doors and ran over to the library, or through the plantings, into the park. [Figure 8.216. 8.217] Seward Park branch librarians wrote about the insatiable hunger of the neighborhood children for American history, noting how quiet, polite and focused they were in their efforts to read and learn. In contrast, the same neighborhood's

[9] "Closed Public Bath a Week After Opening in Seward Park," *New York Times*, July 19, 1904

[10] Samuel Parsons, "Small City Parks, Meeting of March 6, 1906," *Transactions of the American Society if Landscape Architects 1899-1908*, 77.

children seemed to rip up their park.[11] Parsons wrote:

> It is quite a sight to see the thousands of children come pouring out of this school and going into the park. There is a high fence all around it. We found it necessary to widen some of the walks; they are generally twenty-five to thirty-five feet wide, and we thought that would be enough, as we do not like to cut the park all up into walks. In that park there is not an inch that could be so used where we have not put settees.[12]

[Figure 8.216] Roof Reading Room: Seward Park Branch, *Annual Report of the Director* New York Public Library, 1910, 22.

[Figure 8.217] Always Busy: Seward Park, P.S. 62, Bathhouse & Gymnasium, 1905. Library of Congress

By 1914, the pavilion was worn out. The Parks Department's *Annual Report* of that year lists its many failings: the wooden beam construction of the pavilion floor was compromised and sagging; the open arcade and resulting incoming weather had allowed water to accumulate and pool on the sagging pavilion floor, from where it seeped or percolated through the beams, cinders and concrete flooring and the moisture caused the beams to rot and sag and the basement ceiling to leak. In addition, the drainage systems were never fully repaired and needed to be re-done. The baths needed a new a heating and cooling system, the fixtures should be replaced, and the boy's side of the showers and comfort station, which were wholly inadequate, should be enlarged. The estimate for replacing the wooden flooring system with a steel and concrete system as well as all the other improvements needed was expected to cost the Parks Department

[11] "East Side Leads in Book Reading," *New York Times*, March 9, 1913.

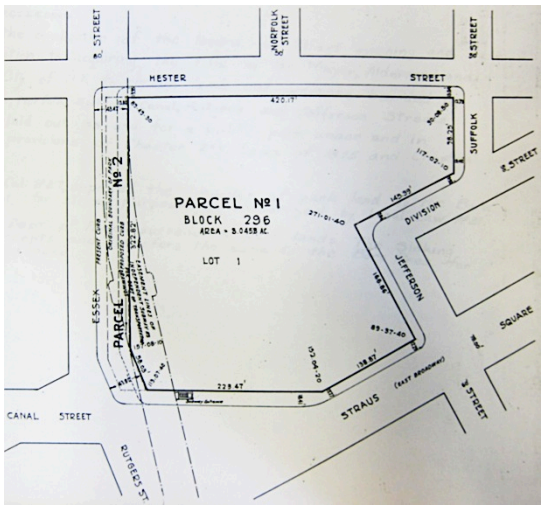
[12] Samuel Parsons, "Small City Parks, Meeting of March 6, 1906," *Transactions of the American Society if Landscape Architects 1899-1908*, 77.

eighteen thousand dollars.[13] There is no indication or record of this work having been done. Given that within a few years the country entered the war, resulting in significant cuts in the city's budget, it is likely that the pavilion continued to deteriorate with only minor maintenance.

8.22 Modifications

In order to clear the way for the new Independent subway line, part of the land belonging to Seward Park was transferred it to the Sinking Fund. Per Local Law 21 of 1931, this reduction in parklands was approved by the Board of Estimate, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, and finalized in 1935. [Figure 8.220. 8.221] Allowing the subway line to cut across Rutgers Square and across the western edge of Seward Park left no alternative but to move the Schiff Fountain and demolish the pavilion, as its basement level, if left in place, would interfere with the subway's path. Rather than building the subway under P.S. 62, the city razed it entirely. Another pavilion replaced the old one, but was sited it on the eastern side of the park, while the Schiff Fountain was moved to the area just outside the park's western fence.

[Figure 8.220] Seward Park
G.W. Bromley, 1909, revised 1915.

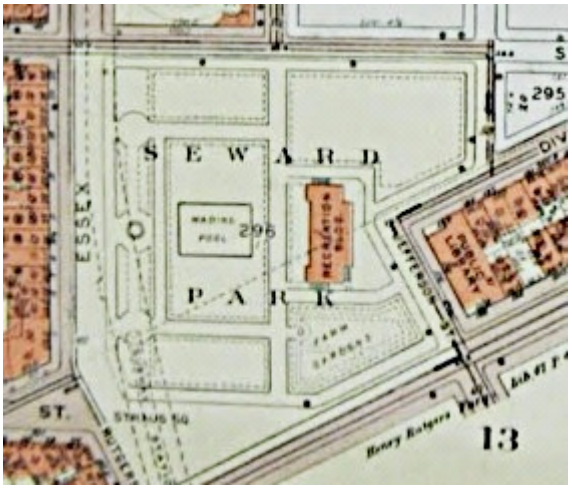


[Figure 8.221] Seward Park: Parcel Map, 1935
Parklands File: William H. Seward Park

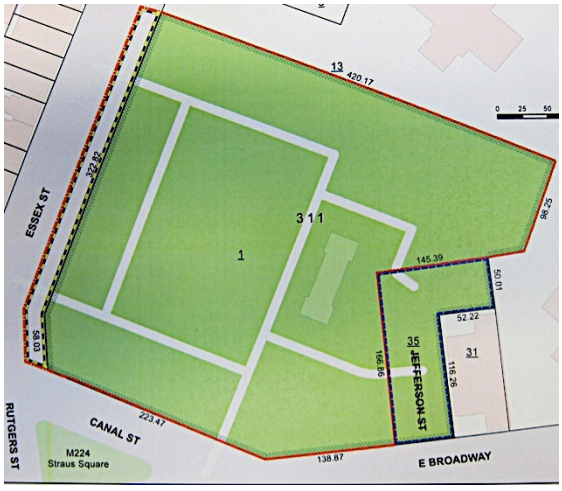
In another property swap between city agencies, Seward Park would gain a small portion

[13] *Annual Report*, 1914, Department of Parks, City of New York, 63.

of park space when the Seward Park Housing Development was being built along the park's Hester Street border. The Board of Estimate approved the closure of Jefferson Street north of East Broadway, and part of Division Street, between Jefferson and Suffolk Streets; those parcels were transferred to Seward Park, effective in 1959. The two land swaps resulted in a total parklands increase for Seward Park from 2.65 acres to 3.046 acres. [Figure 8.222, 8.223]



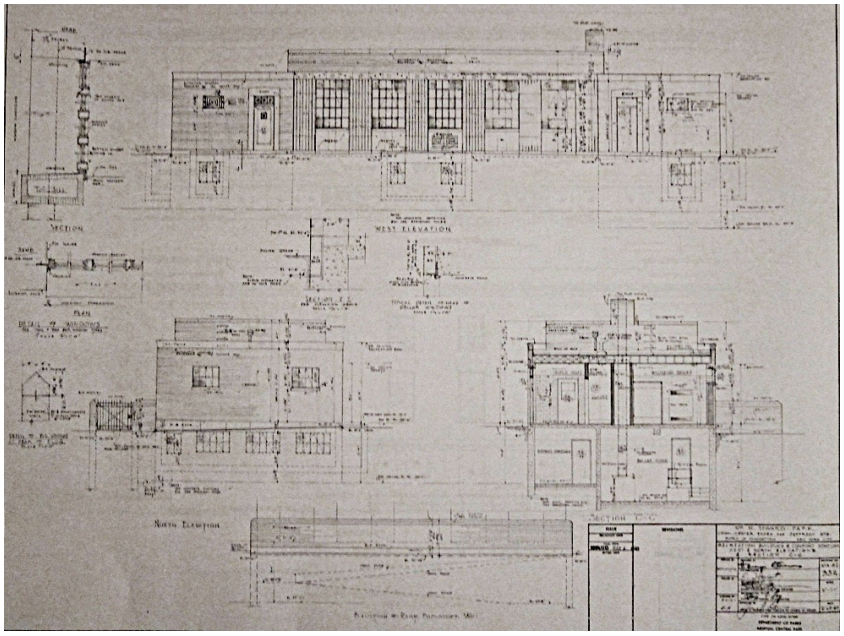
[Figure 8.222] Seward Park, Manhattan Land Book G.W. Bromley & Co, New York, NY, 1959



[Figure 8.223] Seward Park: Subtraction 1935 Addition 1959, Parklands File, William H. Seward Park.

Brunner's pavilion bathhouse was razed in 1936, and the Schiff Fountain was moved the same year. Perhaps because of the Great Depression, it would be five years before a new pavilion was built in its place. Designed by Aymar Embury II, his 1941 pavilion was constructed in cream-colored brick with cream and navy terracotta ornamentation. Designed to be a modernized temple, the eighty-seven by twenty-nine foot one-story structure was divided into three parts: the center, the largest part, is flanked by two equal sized wings that serve as comfort stations. [Figure 8.224] The center has five large sections of divided-light black steel-framed casement windows framed by six widely fluted pilasters created from rectangular concave cream terracotta tiles, laid vertically. Beneath each window section, from the ground to about three feet in height, are large navy Greek key terracotta spandrel panels. Spanning over the windows the tops of the six fluted pilasters is an entablature of alternating navy terracotta and cream brick.

The first row in the entablature consists of large rectangular navy terracotta tiles, laid end to end, upon which are attached alternating patterns of either one large gold star, or three small gold stars applied at sloping angle. Above that are approximately fourteen rows of cream brick, and except for three rows of brick set to resemble dentil moldings, most of the brick is laid in a running bond. Finally the uppermost part of the modernized temple's entablature is a single row of rectangular navy terracotta tiles, laid end to end.



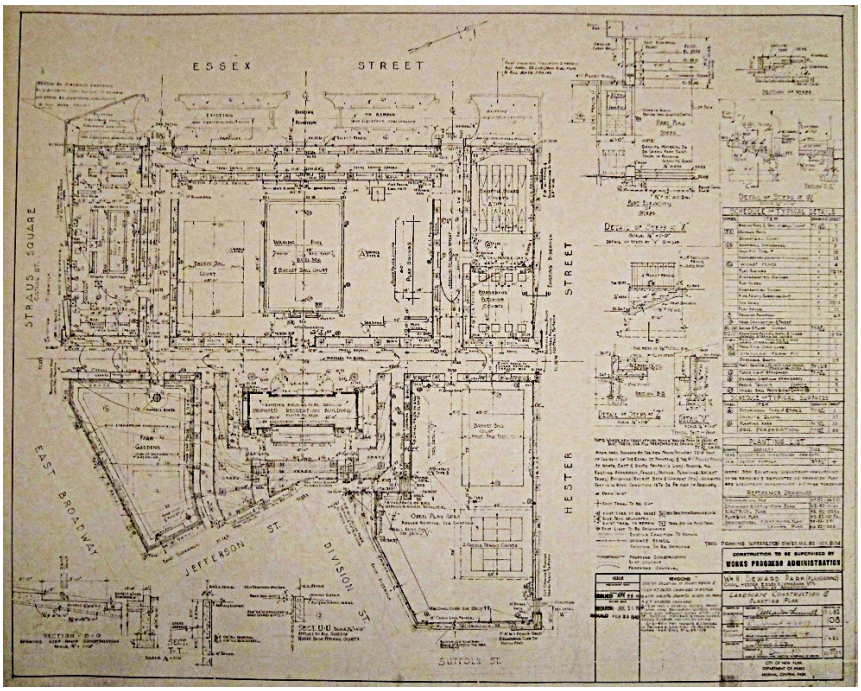
[Figure 8.224] Pavilion: Seward Park, Architect: Aymar Embury II, Maps Archives, Department of Parks, City of New York.

The pavilion is symmetrical, and its two squared side-sections are clad in cream brick, laid in a running bond, and topped with a thin row of coved, navy terracotta tiles. Each of these sections contains the boy's or girls comfort stations. A stroll around the building's rear reveals a basement level. Lacking any ornament or distinguishing elements, it appears it is not open to the public, but may work as a storage facility for the Parks Department. Embury's 1941 pavilion is extant, and appears to be in fairly pristine condition. [Figure 8.225]

Along with the new pavilion in 1941, the park was re-designed into areas of organized sports or recreational activities. [Figure 8.226] Parsons wide path that ran north to south from

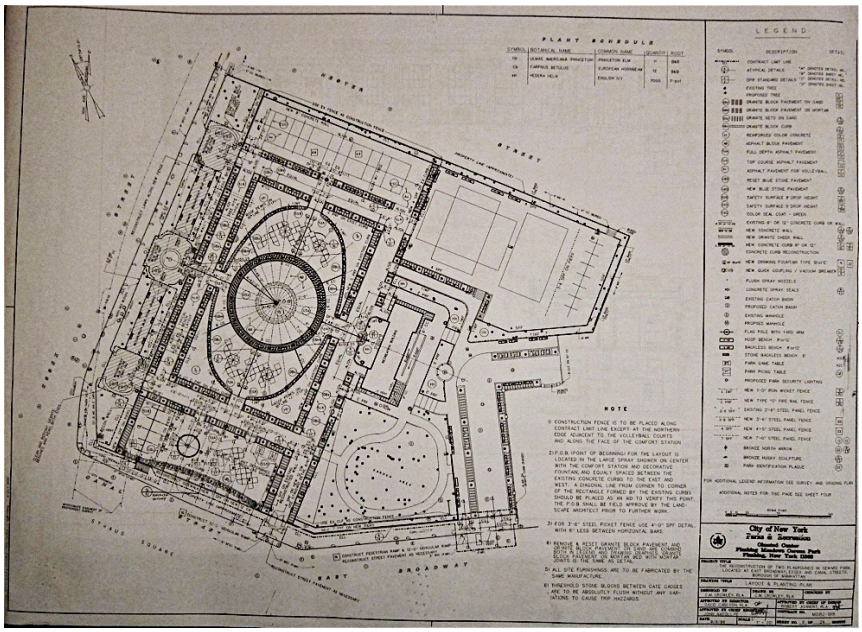
East Broadway to Hester Street was retained, as was the allees of trees that frame it. On the western side of that path were playgrounds, basketball courts, a wading pool, shuffleboard and horseshoes. On the eastern side of the path were laid out farm gardens, small plots of lawn surrounding the new pavilion and basketball and tennis courts.

[Figure 8.225] 1941 Pavilion: Seward Park 2013. Photo: J. Frazer



[Figure 8.226] Park Plan: Seward Park, 1941. Map Archives, Department of Parks, City of New York.

In 2001, a two million dollar capital project was implemented in Seward Park. The project included fencing repair and replacement, removal and replacement of the pool with the installation of two superior and brightly colored playgrounds, and the design and implementation of a circular mosaic in the center of the playgrounds. [Figure 8.227, 8.228] Created to resemble an historic map of the neighborhood, the circular mosaic has stemming from its center bronze and mosaic ribbons, each ribbon with a quote from an historic person in the neighborhood; these quotes were provided by the Tenement Museum. As part of this project, neighborhood volunteers replanted the farm garden, and cleaned the exterior and interior of the pavilion.



[Figure 8.229] Plan: William H. Seward Park, 2001, Maps Archives, Department of Parks, City of New York.

[Figure 8.2210] Mosaic, Seward Park Playground, Photo: J. Frazer

8.23 Conclusion

In the 2001 reconstruction project of Seward Park, the Parks Department has clearly made a decided effort to reference the history of this park and its historic neighborhood. The existing fences were restored or repaired and any missing fences were replaced with like styles and materials. They seem also to have made a choice to shift the park's focus away from older youth recreation to a park with perhaps the finest playground equipment in the city. By retaining the trees from earlier iterations of the parks, they have allowed the park to maintain a more mature, elegant landscaped park vibe. The center path from Parsons' plan is still there, and along it, plenty of park benches to sit and read.

A visit to Seward Park today will reveal a predominantly Asian population who use the park regularly. Tai Chi and other forms of group exercises can be seen there most days of the week, while children run around and play on the playgrounds. Given that some of the small parks now seem wholly devoted to organized competitive sports, this more quiet version dedicated to primarily the young or older population is a relief.

Though Brunner's pavilion was removed in 1936, Embury's pavilion was an interesting, if not nearly as lofty or ennobling replacement. It serves as testimony, once again, to what can be accomplished artistically with a tight budget, modest, yet practical and reliable materials, and a creative force. It has survived at this location for sixty-three years thus far, and should be preserved, along with the trees, Parson's path, and at least, the surrounding fences, as historical reminder of the layers of history lived out in William H. Seward Park.

8.3 DeWitt Clinton Park

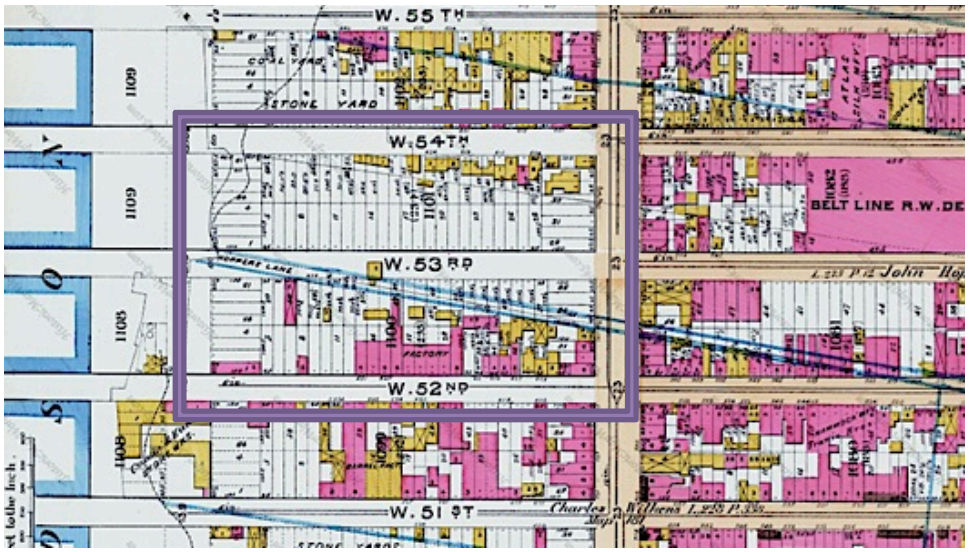
Samuel Parsons seemed to have more affection for DeWitt Clinton Park than for any other small park he designed, "I have one special park to consider as having perhaps more in it, and being a more genuine city playground than anything else in the city; this is DeWitt Clinton Park on the west side of town."[1] Perhaps he was most pleased with it because he was able to combine so many elements successfully into this park's more than seven acres: a playground, outdoor gymnasium & running track, farm school, pavilion bathhouse, very large pergola and a picturesque landscape with then, glorious views of the Hudson River. Sadly, just about every element celebrated by Parsons and praised by critics a hundred years ago disappeared in the 1930s with the removal of over one and a half acres, lopped off from the park's western end to make room for the new Miller Highway. Other than the wrought-iron picket fence installed on the park's perimeter in 1904, the only element remaining in the park from its inception is seventy-nine percent of the land on which it was built and a rather large outcrop of rock emerging from the park's surface.

DeWitt Clinton Park's 7.37 acres encompassed blocks 1100 and 1101, located between West 52nd and West 54th Streets and Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues. It was acquired in 1901 for a total of $1,272,385 and was opened to the public in 1905.[2] According to Parsons, this area was one of the most densely populated sections of the city, "there were tenement houses as far as one can see, and a little further. A map from 1891 shows a slight different story; the two blocks on which DeWitt Clinton Park was to be built were fairly sparsely populated, at least compared to the Lower East Side neighborhoods, but these blocks were surrounded by industry and tenements, so air, water, and soil pollution must have been high. [Figure 8.300]

[1] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "Small City Parks," *Transactions of the American Society of Landscape Architects, 1899-1908,* 75.
[2] "Dewitt Clinton Park Opened to the Public," *New York Times*, November 5, 1905.

Before the park, tenements and industry, the two blocks were part of two large farms, the Stryker and Hopper farms. General Garrit Hopper Stryker built his 1752 mansion right in the middle of what is now the park, on West 53rd Street; it was demolished in 1898. Another home, belonging to the Mott Family (related to the Hoppers), was sited on West 54th Street at the Riverbank; built in 1796, it was demolished in 1897. Several other multi-family dwellings were built on block 1100 and 1101 during the fifty years previous to the city seizing the land for a park; Parsons wrote about the site's condition when it was turned over to the Parks Department:

> It consisted of a mass of cellars and old half pulled down houses, and all that sort of thing….it was very important to leave the ground at least six months or better, a year or more; this one was left over a year before the real park work was commenced. These holes and old cellars and ground would settle and settle and there would be great cracks. Some of the parks in years gone by have been built too hastily, and the cracks and settlement n the walks and holes have made a great deal of trouble. We have been more particular during the past five years.[3]



[Figure 8.300] Blocks 1100 & 1101, G.W. Bromley & Co., *Atlas Of New York City,* 1891.

8.31 Neighborhood History

From 1846 until 1930, this stretch of Eleventh Avenue was part of what was called

[3] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "Small City Parks: Meeting of March 6, 1906," *Transactions of the American Society of Landscape Architects 1899-1908,* 75.

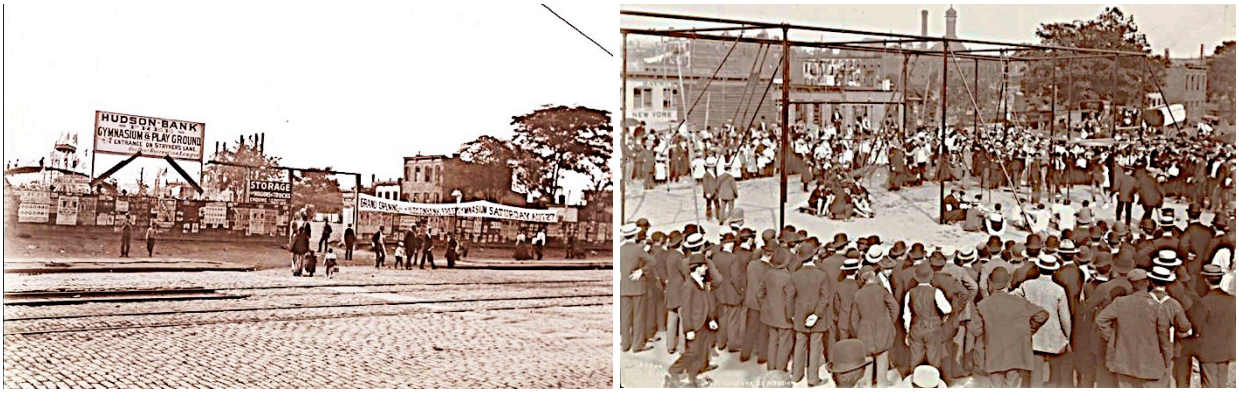
"Death Avenue" where the New York Central and the Hudson River Railroad drove their trains on tracks that ran down the middle of Eleventh Avenue until 34th Street. The trains' tracks turned east on 34th Street, and headed down Tenth Avenue instead. Despite the railroad companies hiring "west side cowboys" to ride in front of the trains and warn pedestrians of their coming, every year dozens were killed as they crossed Eleventh Avenue, sometimes falling in front of the train, or somehow otherwise oblivious to the coming trains.[4] [Figure 8.310, 8.311]

[Figure 8.311] West Side Cowboy riding north on Tenth Avenue & 17th Street, Kalmbach Publishing Co. 1930.

The area from West 34th Street to West 59th Street, Eight Avenue to the Hudson River was nicked-named "Hell's Kitchen" in the late nineteenth century. Though no one is certain exactly how the neighborhood got that name, some think it is based on an 1881 *New York Times* article in which a reporter describes a tenement on West 39th Street where a series of horrible crimes took place.[5] The term "Hell's Kitchen" was used to describe the two buildings, and eventually, was used to describe the entire neighborhood. In the late 1880s, 1890s and early 1900s, Hell's Kitchen was a place of tenements and factories mixed together with breweries, slaughterhouses, warehouses, brickyards and docks; there was a great deal of both crime and poverty.

[4] "Death Avenue," *New York Times*, July 13, 1907, and Christopher Gray, "When a Monster Plied the West Side," *New York Times*, December 22, 2011.
[5] "A Fiendish Wife-Murder," *New York Times*, December 12, 1881

While the park property was still in the process of being condemned and obtained by the city, the Outdoor Recreation League, led by Charles Stover, opened the Hudsonbank Gymnasium and Playground, on West 53rd and Eleventh Avenue. [Figure 8.312] It was the first outdoor gymnasium to open in the city, and it would be the first of several for the Outdoor Recreation League, which they opened and managed, while they worked to persuade the Parks Department to take over their management, maintenance and costs.[6] Most of their gymnasiums were built on city property, with city permission. In the case of DeWitt Clinton Park and later, William H. Seward Park, the League knew that the city plans were to turn these blocks into parks, so by creating a playground first, they forced the Parks Department's hand.



[Figure 8.312] Hudsonbank Gymnasium & Playground 1898;
Byron Company Photo, Museum of the City of New York.

By 1902, the League had abandoned their playground, and Fannie Parsons (no relation to Samuel), with the permission of Parks Commissioner William Wilcox, borrowed some of the city's land in order to create a farming school for children in the neighborhood. Her idea was an incredible success, but it required a lot of work to get the site ready: men and children from the neighborhood pitched in, clearing the rubbish and debris on site and preparing the land for many little gardening plots. [Figure 8.313] Commissioner Wilcox set up another temporary playground

[6] "First Open Air Gymnasium: Outdoor Recreation League Opens Grounds at Fifty-Third Street and Eleventh Avenue," *New York Times,* August 28, 1898.

on the property.[7] In 1902, the farm garden was a plot "100 by 200 feet, divided into four feet by eight feet plots to accommodate two hundred and seventy-seven farming children. A flowerbed was maintained in the centre and other beds of flowers for cutting were grown at points around the gardens. All of the flowers were thrifty and were grown successfully. The borders were planted with clover, rye, wheat, oats and buckwheat." There was almost immediately a waitlist of children for a plot of land; of those who had the good fortune to participate the first year, roughly half were girls and half were boys.[8] [Figure 8.314]

[Figure 8.313] Before the Farm School; Parsons, Mrs. "The Birth & Development of DeWitt Clinton Park," *The Playground*, 19, September 1908, 5.

[Figure 8.314] Children's School Farm: DeWitt Clinton Park Parsons, Fannie, "The First Children's Farm School," *The Outlook*, 74, May 1903, 70.

Word quickly travelled about Mrs. Parson's farm school and many adults came to visit the popular program. In 1902, they had over two hundred adult visitors to the site, and in 1903, over one thousand came! The visitors arrived from all over the United States, as well as from Italy, Cuba, Canada, England, Puerto Rico and Jamaica.[9] In addition, over eight hundred school children, accompanied by their teachers and principals came on school field trips to learn about the program. Mrs. Parsons' farm school idea became very popular all over the city, as other small parks and other city parks programs adopted the idea of farm schools. When the Parks Department was finally ready to layout the new park, Mrs. Parsons asked to continue the farm

[7] Mrs. Henry Parsons, "The Birth & Development of DeWitt Clinton Park," *The Playground*, 19, September 1908, 5.
[8] *Annual Report,* 1903, Parks Department City of New York, 14.
[9] Ibid.

garden program within the park. Samuel Parsons allocated the western one third of the park to her farm school. The Dewitt Clinton Park Farm School ran until 1931.[10]

8.32 Park Plan

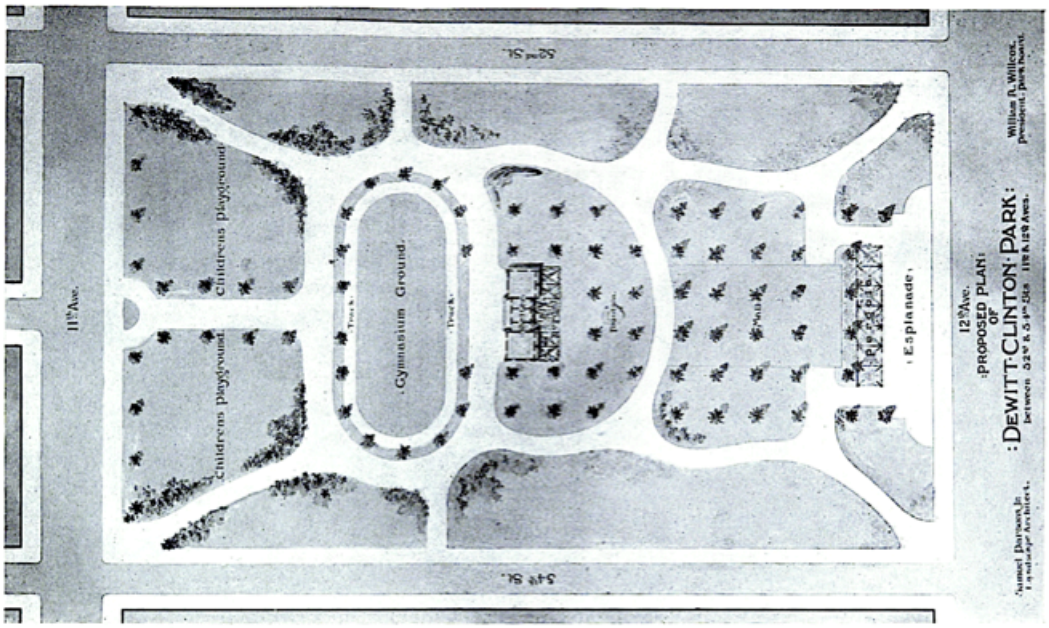
An important component of Samuel Parsons' pleasure with DeWitt Clinton Park had to have been its size. At 7.37 acres, it was more than double the size of John Jay (3.004 acres) and St. Gabriel's Parks, and two and a half times the size of William H. Seward Park, and as such, gave him much more room to both landscape, and fit in playgrounds, buildings and gymnastic equipment. The layout of this park "differs considerably from the general city park construction. The center feature is carried on practically a level place, beginning at Eleventh Avenue grade and ending at the brow of an embankment sixty-two feet from the Twelfth Avenue train line." The park's slopes are formed from the center plateau, sloping north and south to West 52nd Street and West 54th Street, and "from the brow of the slope to Twelfth Avenue," where the park met the now Hudson River.[11] The sloping landscape and some rather large rock formations, mid park on its southerly side, ensured an undulating topography onto which the curvilinear paths that Parsons planned would provide the park visitor with ever-changing park views as well as delightful river views.

Parsons divided the park into roughly three fairly equal sections. In the eastern third of the park, closest to Eleventh Avenue, he sited children's playgrounds, an outdoor gymnasium surrounded by a running track, and, at an elevation in the park that was most advantageous to taking in the river view, he sited the park's pavilion, designed by John Stewart Barney and Henry Otis Chapman. The second third of the park was devoted to Mrs. Parsons' Farm Gardening

[10] Marie Warsh, "Cultivating Citizens: The Children's School Farm in New York City, 1902–1931," *Buildings & Landscapes*: *Journal of Vernacular Arch Forum*, 18:1, Spring 2011, 82.

[11] *Annual Report,* 1904, Department of Parks, City of New York, 36.

School. The gardening plots were all located in a wide center portion of the park, between the pavilion and the second structure, a long pergola, also designed by Barney & Chapman. The pergola was sited at the park's western border, but Parsons sited it back from the park's edge enough to plan a comfortable esplanade for those park attendees that wanted to be enjoy the park from the area closest to the river. The park's final third, located on the sloping northern and southern sides of the park, was devoted to Parson's curvilinear walkways, lawns, shrubs, and trees. [Figure 8.320]



[Figure 8.320] Proposed Plan: DeWitt Clinton Park
Samuel Parsons, Jr., *Landscape Gardening Studies,* New York: John Lane Company, 1910, 27.

Parsons wrote in 1910 that this park was

> …especially well arranged for the introduction of playgrounds. The borders on three sides were more, or less, steep, and through the center extends a level plateau, which had been made more level by grading. Walks winded up from all the four corners and at two intermediate points on one side and one on the other. The steepness of the grounds made it possible to produce as picturesque park-like effect of trees and shrubs over a large extent of the territory.[12]

Parsons noted that large rocks appeared naturally in several points in the park's landscape; some

[12] Samuel Parsons, Jr, *Landscape Gardening*, New York: John Lane Company, 1910, 28.

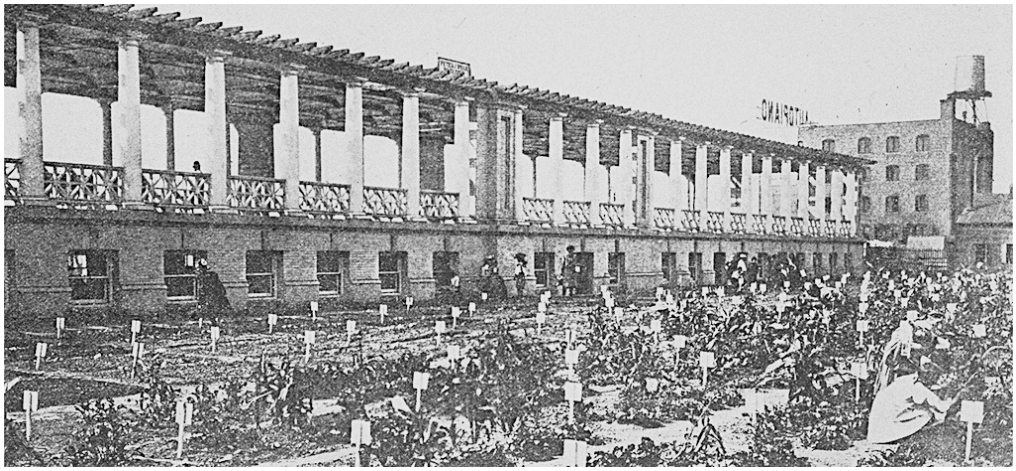
of those rocks are still in the park. Parson described the lawns as "undulating" and said that the pergola stood over a high steep bank at the park's western end. He referred to the pavilion as a "music stand," perhaps because it served as a stage for summer concerts.[13]

The park's architects, J. Stewart Barney and Henry Otis Chapman, designed two monumental buildings for the neighborhood of DeWitt Clinton Park; the first, a "pergola," was home for the farm school, while the second was a bathhouse pavilion. [Figure 8.321] Both buildings took their architectural cues from classical temples; while the pergola's columns encircled the perimeter of the building, the pavilion's colonnades framed the eastern and western elevations, while pilasters framed the arches on the north and south elevations, suggesting a continued rhythm of columns along the temple's perimeter. Both structures were built on raised basements, allowing space for windows on the lower level façades; both structures had open-air main floors. [Figure 8.322, 8.323]

[Figure 8.321] View of Pavilion, Pergola and North (Hudson) River, DeWitt Clinton Park, 1905
Marie Warsh, "Cultivating Citizens," 79. New York Historical Society, George Hall & Son Collection

[13] Parsons, *Landscape Gardening*, 28.

[Figure 8.322] Pergola, Children's Farm Garden, DeWitt Clinton Park, Annual *Report,* Department of Parks, City of New York, 1907, 71.



[Figure 8.323] "Children's Garden: 1908,"
Mrs. Henry Parsons, "The Birth & Development of DeWitt Clinton Park," *The Playground*, 19, September 1908, 6.

The $34,800 two hundred and seven foot long pergola was sited on the park's western end, affording stunning views of the North (now, Hudson) River. The lower level was lit naturally with square windows sited rhythmically between and under each column on both the eastern and western façades; the children and their teachers had plenty of natural light inside. Also in the lower level of the pergola was a lecture and demonstration hall with a seating capacity of between two and three hundred seats; within the lecture hall were two sets of folding doors so that it could be subdivided into smaller rooms.[14] Built with light brick with terracotta

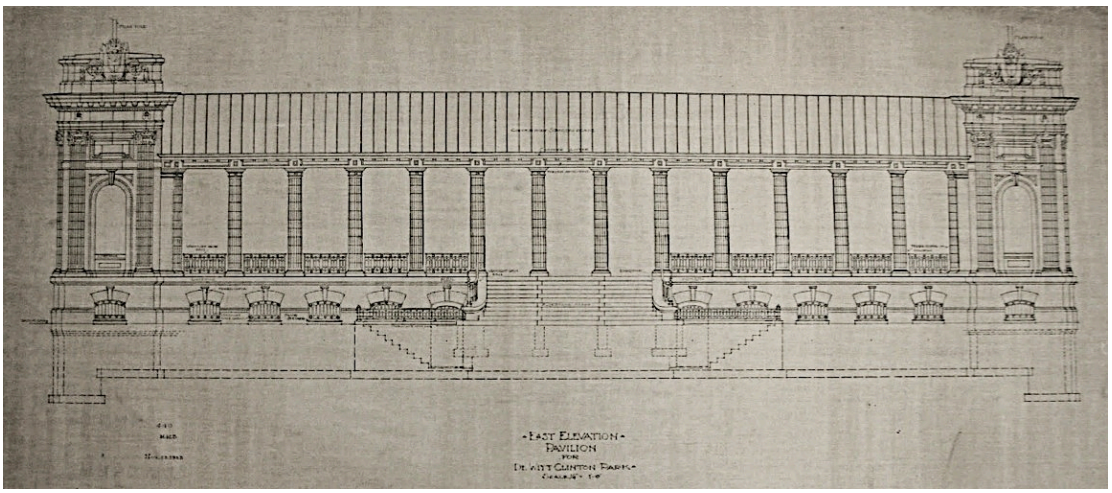
[14] *Annual Report*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 1905, 59.

ornament, Barney and Chapman designed the pergola's materials to coordinate with those of the pavilion. Between the columns on the main was fitted a decorative, waist-high, wrought-iron railing to prevent the farmers from falling over the sides. Its roof was a "summer house" construction with beams stretching from column to column, and its roof, red tiles. Also inside the lower level were a boiler room, a tool and workroom, a kitchen and a large room for the gardening laborers and their equipment; all rooms were twenty-seven feet wide. [Figure 8.324] The paths surrounding the pergola sat twenty feet above Twelfth Avenue.[15] The lack of walls on the pergola's main floor insured unobstructed views of the river both around and through it.

[Figure 8.324] Pergola (lower level): Housekeeping Room, DeWitt Clinton Park, New York City
M. Louise Greene, *Among School Gardens*, New York, Charities Publication Committee, 1910, 48

In the park's center, Parsons sited the bathhouse pavilion. Barney & Chapman's $56,000 structure was equipped with shower baths, comfort stations and classrooms, the later used for indoor gymnasiums and exercises. The main floor, from which a visitor had full view of the park in any direction, as well as of the river, was designed both as a concert stage and a resting and play place for mothers and their youngest children. Just as in Seward Park, these mothers were given rocking chairs on which to sit, while watching their children play and taking in the view. [Figure 8.325, 8.326]

[15] *Annual Report*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 1905, 39.



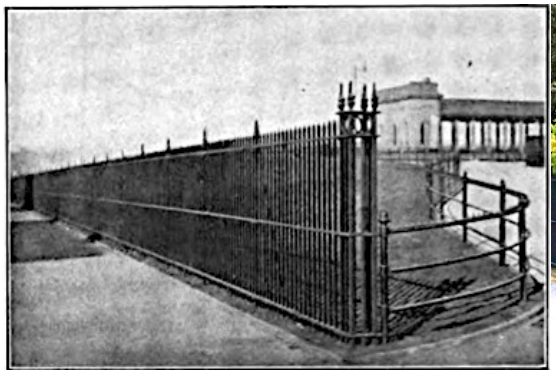
[Figure 8.325] "Pavilion: East Elevation, De Witt Clinton Park", Architects: Barney & Chapman, 1905
Courtesy: Municipal Archives, Department of Records, City of New York.

[Figure 8.326] Pavilion: Opening Day, De Witt Clinton Park
Annual Report, Parks Department, City of New York, 1905, 370.

Like the pergola, the pavilion's materials were light brick and terra cotta with limestone trim, and wrought-iron railings between the columns. The barrel-vault roof's arches sprung from the columns; the roof was clad in copper with copper gutters and downspouts. From the north and south elevations, with their three open arches, the facades resembled Roman triumphal arches. With the columns and arches, the mothers and their young children could enjoy a breeze on a hot summer day. In the rooms below, the basement walls and floors were tiled with

enameled brick. Marble partitions separated each shower stall from the next.[16]

Surrounding the park, Parsons installed 2,171 linear feet of five feet, six-inch tall wrought-iron picket fencing.[17] A 1913 illustration and advertisement by F.E. Carpenter Company, at 253 Broadway, in the *Sweets Catalogue of Building Construction*, suggests that the fence surrounding DeWitt Clinton Park today is the same one installed in 1905. [Figure 8.327, 8.328]



[Figure 8.327] Iron Railing & Pipe Fence, DeWitt Clinton Park
F. E. Carpenter & Company, *Sweets Catalogue of Building Construction: Architects & Builders Edition*, New York: Architectural Record Company, 1913, 502-3

[Figure 8.328] 1905 Wrought Iron Fence bordering the entire perimeter of DeWitt Clinton Park
Photo: J. Frazer

In 1906, when Samuel Parsons, Jr. addressed the American Society of Landscape Architects, he told them that DeWitt Clinton had "the most perfect buildings of any park in the city." He said that Barney & Chapman had taken advantage of the mistakes in other parks, and had made the buildings more convenient and simple than the others." And, he added, "they were not quite so expensive."[18] By 1914, according to the Parks Department engineers, the pavilion and the pergola were in horrible condition. The pavilion needed a complete overhaul and would require at least eighteen thousand dollars of interior repair work alone. The wooden beam floors had been placed, according to the report, on a "bed of cinders and then finished with cement or tile." The floors of the main level were sagging so badly that water was collecting in puddles and

[16] *Annual Report*, Parks Department, City of New York, 1904, 25.
[17] *Annual Report*, Parks Department, City of New York, 1905, 39.
[18] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "Small City Parks," *Transactions of the American Society of Landscape Architects, 1899-1908,* 76.

seeping into the basement. Employees and bathhouse visitors alike worried for their safety in the building, with the sagging moisture-bound beams rotting above their heads in the pavilion's showers and classrooms. The Parks Department's engineers recommended that the building's floor/ceiling system be removed and replaced with concrete and steel, and with that, all of the shower bath facilities, toilets and heating system needed replacement. The pavilion's drainage systems needed to be completely re-worked and finally, the building should be fully waterproofed.[19]

In the same *Annual Report*, the Parks Department's engineer described the pergola as a "big useless structure from its first day." He said the pergola provides no shelter and serves only as a "rendezvous for local undesirables," that its basement was laid out without any thought for its end use, as even the large assembly hall is useless, since the "heavy concrete piers run down the center of it and obstruct any view of the stage." He added that all the rooms are unfit for use, as they are all below grade in an un-waterproofed structure, and are all cold, damp and unhealthy to be in. New plans and specifications had been drawn up to replace the wooden columns on the pergola with cast iron columns and to install a new tile roof. The $17,594 contract was awarded, but the contractor never commenced the work, and by 1913, the project was abandoned. Given the city's weak financial position in 1914 the project would be further deferred.[20]

The Parks Department policy is the same as all city departments, in that they are bound to accept the lowest bidder on any city construction contract. In the case of the pavilion and pergola, they had been designed by leading architects of the day; Barney & Chapman were prolific popular architects whose other buildings were not experiencing the issues of those in DeWitt Clinton Park. It is impossible to know now, if the cause of their quick demise was the

[19] *Annual Report,* Parks Department, City of New York, 1914, 63.
[20] *Annual Report*, Parks Department, City of New York, 1914, 102.

design, the construction, or the overuse of a bathhouse that would typically involve a lot of water.

The most popular aspect of this park, from its inception, was the farm garden school. To think that in 1897, the Committee on Small Parks reported that the twenty second ward, in which this park is located, had one saloon for every four hundred persons, but only one church for every 4,500. "Forty pastors and managers of all charitable and philanthropic concerns in the vicinity had joined together to ask for the selection of this site as a new small park."[21] Within only a few years, the park would be teeming with children responsible for their own individual gardens, and a long waitlist of children waiting for their chance to do the same. Photos from the 1930 Parks Department's *Annual Report* show the award recipients from the 1930 Harvest Festival, indicating the program was still going strong. [Figure 8.329]

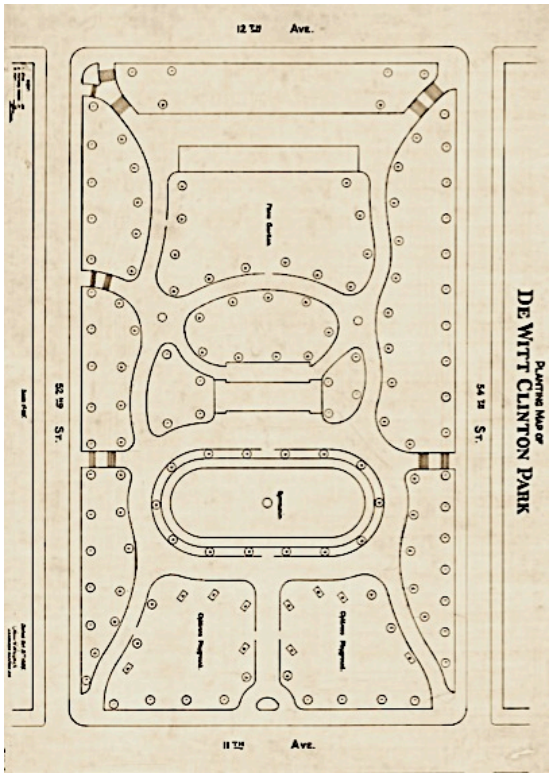
[Figure 8.329] A Prize Winner at the Harvest Festival Harvest 1930
DeWitt Clinton School Farm, *Annual Report,* Manhattan Department of Parks, City of New York, 1930, 126 & 124

8.33 Changes in the Park

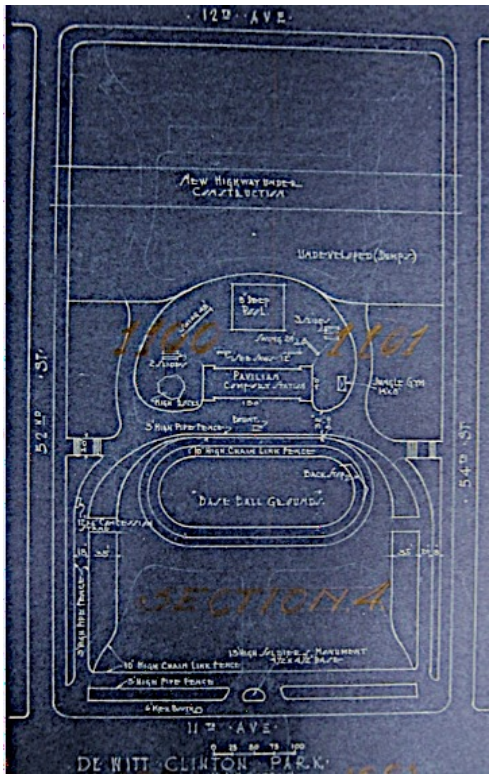
The farm garden program would remain popular with the neighborhood until 1931, when the Parks Commissioner of Manhattan transferred to the Commissioner of the Sinking Fund, Borough of Manhattan, the furthest west 1.548 acres of DeWitt Clinton Park. This transaction was authorized by Local Law 9, a law passed for the purpose of creating and expanding streets,

[21] *Report of the Committee on Small Parks, City of New York*, New York: Martin B. Brown Company, 1897, 18.

and providing for changes on the map of the city of New York. The city's Westside Improvement Project included a series of large-scale infrastructure projects built to ease automobile traffic within the city.[22] The Miller Elevated Highway was part of the city's expansion of Twelfth Avenue and the park's 1.548 acres were removed to make room for the new highway.[23] With the removal of land, went the removal of the pergola and the farm garden; in the abbreviated space, a new wading pool was installed. [Figure 8.330, 8.331, 8.332, 8.333] By 1973, the highway failed when it collapsed under the weight of a truck traversing it; the highway was abandoned, and eventually replaced by the surface-level West Side Highway.



[Figure 8.330] Planting Plan 1905, Samuel Parsons.



[Figure 8.331] New Plan: Parklands File

Both: DeWitt Clinton Park, Department of Parks, City of New York

[22] Marie Warsh, "Cultivating Citizens: The Children's School Farm in New York City, 1902-1931," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, 18:1, Spring 2011, 82.

[23] *Parklands File: DeWitt Clinton Park.*

[Figure 8.332] DeWitt Clinton Park
G. W. Bromley, *Atlas of New York*, (1909, revised 1912).

[Figure 8.333] DeWitt Clinton Park
G. W. Bromley, *Atlas of New York*, 1934

In 1945, the landscape architecture design firm of Cynthia Wiley and Alice Recknagel was hired to re-landscape the park. Their landscape plan followed another reconstruction of DeWitt Clinton Park in which the pavilion was removed, and replaced by an architecturally insignificant one-story brick comfort station, measuring twenty-nine feet by twenty-seven feet. [Figure 8.334] Later rehabilitation plans would be implemented in 1955 and 1973. In 1998, the park was updated with new playgrounds, new baseball and soccer fields covered in simulated grass turf, basketball and handball courts, and in place of the wading pool, a three-frog water spray garden, with was installed for children. [Figure 8.335]


[Figure 8.334] DeWitt Clinton Park: Comfort Station & Frog Spray 2013 Photos: J. Frazer

8.34 Conclusion

Dewitt Clinton Park, in its original form had two lovely buildings, sited on a scenic and undulating landscape, with an innovative and new farm gardening program, and all with stunning river views. Original to the landscape were large beds of rock that were left intact. The buildings failed and were eventually removed, but replaced with a reliable and functional, yet architecturally uninteresting comfort station. The beautiful views were first replaced by the elevated highway, and now, by the west side highway. The farm garden is gone, replaced with playgrounds, a frog spray and handball courts; where playgrounds once were, now are baseball and soccer fields. The wrought-iron fence surrounding the park, as well as the large outcropping of rocks (around which is now a playground) appear to be the only items extant in the park. Any future design work or plans for this park should take care to maintain and preserve both.


Our Garden (27)

Our Gardens (29)

Henry G. Parsons, *Children's Gardens for Pleasure, Health & Education*, New York: Sturgis & Walton Co., 1910.

Children Outside Digging Making Gardens
Bain Collection, Library of Congress

New York City School Children Making a Garden
Bain Collection, Library of Congress

Planting Seed
Annual Report: Department of Parks,
City of New York, 1908, 65.

Getting Acquainted with Aphis: Mrs. Parsons & her Little Farmers
Brown Bros. photo, H.G. Parsons, *Children's Gardens for Pleasure, Health & Education,* NY: Sturgis & Walton Co., 1910,117.

"The Slide: ca.1908" "Rock-a-bye Swing: 1911"
DeWitt Clinton Park, Photo Archives: Parks Department, City of New York

Dewitt Clinton Park: Enrolling for a Farm (112); View of the Children's Farm School (Frontispiece)
Parsons, Henry G., *Children's Gardens for Pleasure, Health & Education*, New York: Sturgis & Walton Co., 1910.

8.4 St. Gabriel's Park

The site for St. Gabriel's Park, block 941, between East 35th Street and East 36th Street, First and Second Avenues, has a rich history that includes a short-lived Revolutionary War battle, farming, transportation, as well as the history of the park itself. When St. Gabriel's Park opened in 1906, Parsons' plan for the park was the antithesis of what he revered in the Vaux and Olmsted parks; plowed flat for playground surface and given over almost completely to recreation, only the park's perimeters were treated with shrubs, lawn or foliage. Learning from other playground parks, Parsons fenced in all the park's landscaped areas to keep the trees and foliage inaccessible and indestructible by playground attendees. No ennobling temple was built to uplift the masses of the neighborhood; in fact, the park would not have a comfort station until nineteen years after it opened. Records of park attendance and inter-park athletic competitions suggest that as a playground and outdoor gymnasium, the park was immediately successful. However, a 1939-1940 bisection imposed upon St. Gabriel's Park to create an approach to the Queens Midtown Tunnel, severely compromised the park, and serves as a reminder of the importance of parkland preservation.

Originally named "Civic Park" by the Parks Department's commissioners, the as yet, unopened park's name was changed to St. Gabriel's Park in 1903.[1] The name references St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church and School located on East 36th Street, and overlooking the park's northern side. Located in the twenty-first ward, this park site was recommended by the Advisory Committee on Small Parks in its 1897 *Report* to Mayor William L. Strong, in which they described the population in the ward as "rough, and at times turbulent," adding that a few years prior to their 1897 report, their "gangs were among the worst in the city."[2] Some of the

[1] *Minutes of the Parks Board 1903*, City of New York, December 23, 1903, 356.
[2] *Report of Committee on Small Parks, City of New York 1897,* New York: Martin B. Brown Company, 1897, 16-17.

boys who grew up in the poor and polluted neighborhood of Kip's Bay formed gangs and terrorized the neighborhood; Jacob Riis believed that small neighborhood parks would change the trajectory of the "neighborhood roughs" while converting them into law-abiding citizens, "the playground is here to wrestle with the gang for the boy, and it will win."[3] The tenements on Block 941 were, according to the Small Parks Advisory Committee, "old, rather worthless" and "could be obtained at a justifiable cost."[4] [Figure 8.400]

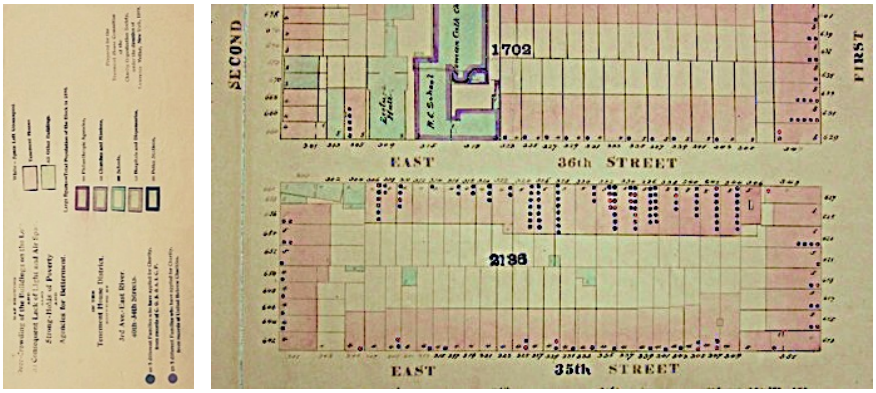
[Figure 8.400] Block 941: proposed site for St. Gabriel's Park
Bromley, G.W. & Walter S., *Atlas of the City Of New York, Manhattan Island,* Philadelphia: Bromley & Co., 1891.

By 1901, when the city pursued this land for a park, they could rely, in part, on information published by the Charity Organization Society (COS). In the late 1890s, the COS conducted surveys of the city's poorest districts, collecting data on poverty and illness within each building on each city block. Assisted in their comprehensive survey by the Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor (AICP) and the United Hebrew Charities (UHC), the COS documented, by building, those that had applied for assistance from the COS, the AICP and the UHC. Combining that information with data from the city's Board of Health, they documented, again, by building and by block, cases of tuberculosis, scarlet fever, typhoid fever and diphtheria. Lawrence Veiller, the Director of the Tenement House Committee, requested that the COS use

[3] Riis, Jacob, "Letting in the Light," *The Battle with the Slum*, NY: MacMillan, 1902, 296.
[4] *Report on Small Parks,* 16.

this information to create two sets of large atlases to document visually the city's poorest neighborhoods. These atlases were created to hang in a traveling exhibition on tenement reform, so the pages of the atlas were quite large, some were as large as eight by ten feet. In the first atlas, "poverty maps" detailed Manhattan's poorest blocks, with every building and block drawn to scale and each block's total population noted boldly within the block. Color-coded dots on each building indicated the number of families per building that had sought financial assistance. The "disease maps" were drawn in the same way as the poverty maps, except that the color-coded dots indicated occurrence rates of disease, by type and by number, per house.

The poverty map prepared for the Kip's Bay neighborhood showed an "over crowding of the buildings" on block 941 in 1899; 2,136 people lived in sixty-five buildings, or roughly, thirty-three people per structure, all of whom were displaced to create the park. This is not a high number for the tenements of the Lower East Side, but given that during this period, this neighborhood was primarily rowhouses, the population is much more dense per building than it seems at first glance. Each dot on the poverty map represented applications to a charity for help from "at least five different families." Black dots indicated COS or AICP requests, while purple indicated UHC requests. Almost every building on block 941 had at least five families that sought charity. [Figure 8.401, 8.402]



[Figure 8.401, 8.402] "Legend & Map indicating Overcrowding of Buildings & Consequent Lack of Light, Air & Space, 3rd Ave.-East River, 40-34th Street," *Tenement House Committee*, New York: Charity Organization

Proceedings began in 1901 to acquire the 2.947-acre site; in 1903, when the negotiations were complete, the city had paid $1,034,711 for the land.[5] Despite the work of the COS and the Committee on Small Parks, in his 1904 *Annual Report*, Parks Commissioner John Pallas gave the credit for the site selection to the neighborhood residents themselves:

> …this park was authorized in response to the plea for a breathing spot, by the dwellers of the middle east side of Manhattan.[6]

Pallas added that the "destruction of the tenements … left the site covered with rubbish and debris to a depth of seven feet." He estimated that the "work of removal will he completed in a few months." Predicting that the park would be open to the public before the present Commissioners' terms ended, he planned "17,000 cubic yards of clean earth … and lawns graded where now stands a dreary waste of broken brick and plaster." He added that the new small park's plan would be "modern" with playgrounds and gymnasium features and would cost the Parks Department, before any buildings or equipment, approximately $65,000 to prepare.[7]

8.41 Neighborhood: History

The block upon which St. Gabriel's Park is sited, hosted the mid-seventeenth century Jacobus Henderson Kip Mansion and his adjoining Kip Farm, a "goodly estate, covering one hundred and fifty acres, and comprising meadow, woodland and stream."[8] Kip acquired the land in a grant from the Dutch West India Company.[9] He and his wife built their home, centering it on what is now East 35th Street and Second Avenue, with Holland brick, having "three windows on

[5] *Annual Report 1903*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 62.

[6] *Annual Report 1904*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 27.

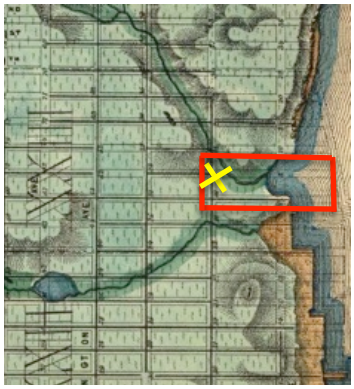
[7] Ibid.

[8] Federal Writers Project, *New York City Guide,* New York: Random House, 1939, 208.

[9] Aronson, Julie and Marjorie Wiseman, *Perfect Likeness: European and American Portrait Miniatures from the Cincinnati Art Museum,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 265.

one side of the door, and two windows on the other."[10] [Figure 8.410] Their farm extended north to 42nd Street, south to 27th Street, and east to an inlet bay where 34th Street now meets the East River; their farm was known for its luscious fruit: plums, pears and newton apples. Named for the property it abutted, Kip's Bay was fed by two rivers; though the bay was filled in long ago, the neighborhood still bears its name.[11] [Figure 8.411]

[Figure 8.410] Kip House 1655 35th Street & Second Avenue *Greater Astoria Historical Society* http://astoriahistory.smugmug.com



[8.411] Red: St. Gabriel's Park, Yellow: Kip House; Rivers leading to Kips Bay, Egbert Viele's 1865 *Sanitary & Topo* Map *of the City and Island of NY.*

[Figure 8.412] Battle at Kip's Bay John Lodge, *Chart & Plan of the of the Harbor of New York*, London: John Bew, 1781

More than one hundred and twenty years later, Kip's Bay would serve as a site of great disappointment for General George Washington. Four thousand British troops landed their ships at Kip's Bay on September 15, 1776, at what is now the eastern foot of 33rd Street.[Figure 8.412] Outnumbered by eight to one, Connecticut militiamen scrambled to get away, leaving their General in a state of disgust. He was reported to have "thrown his hat on the ground and cried, 'are these the men with which I am to defend America?' "[12] The British quickly captured the city while American militiamen marched north and away.[13]

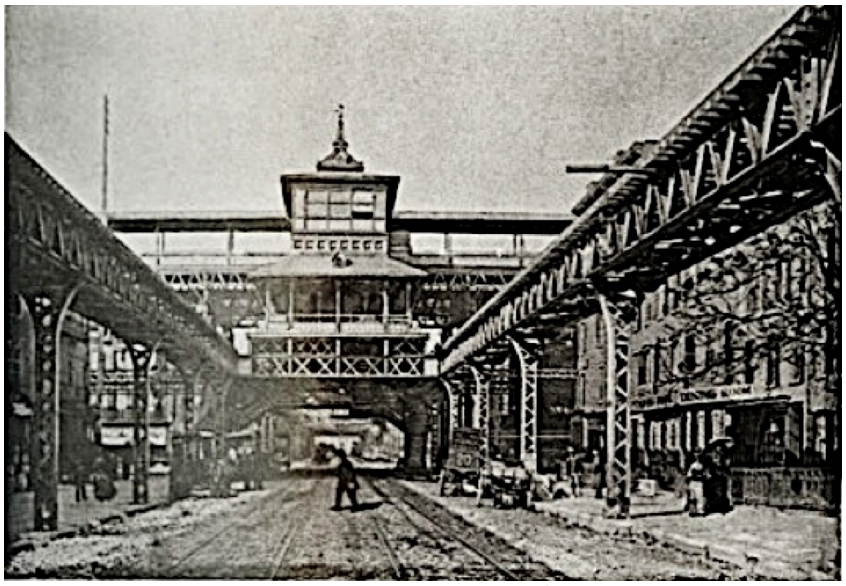
[10] "Few Landmarks around Kip's Bay," *New York Times*, November 28, 1913.

[11] City History Club Of New York, *Historical Guide to the City Of New York*, New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1909, 133; Federal Writers Project, *New York City Guide,* New York: Random House, 1939, 123.

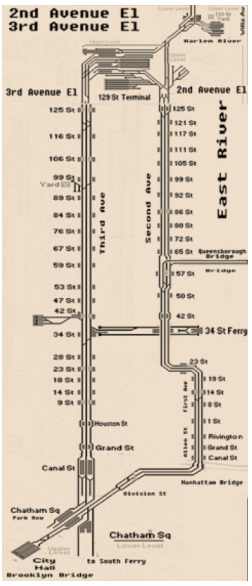
[12] James T. Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensible Man,* New York: Little Brown & Company, 1974, 80.

[13] City History Club Of New York, *Historical Guide to the City Of New York*, New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1909, 133.

One hundred years later, in 1880, the Second Avenue El was built; it ran from City Hall, up First Avenue until 23rd Street, and then up Second Avenue until the Harlem River. [Figure 8.413] Only one block south of St. Gabriel's Park site was a major stop on the "El," where riders could catch the eastbound 34th Street train, to the East 34th Street Ferry, and from there, Long Island's Rail Road passenger terminal in Long Island City.[14] [Figure 8.414]



[Figure 8.414] "El" Stop at Second Avenue & 34th Street 1891
A. Wittemann, *Indelible Photographs*, Mina Rees Library
City University of New York, Graduate School & University Center



[Figure 8.413] Third & Second Avenue El
Time-traveling on the Second Ave. El,
http://el2.ash.com/map2.html

Though the elevated trains made travel uptown much faster, and helped disperse the growing poor and immigrant populations of the late 1800s from dense downtown neighborhoods to ones further north, their tracks blocked most sunlight from reaching under them, while the trains cast heavy soot and noise pollution along their tracks. One visitor described the coal burning trains on these tracks as "unsightly," "abominable," "ever active volcanoes" that left black smoke, ashes, cinder and sparks in their wakes. Those who could afford only the housing

[14] Brian Cudahy, *A Century of Subways: Celebrating 100 Years of New York's Underground Railways*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2003, 55; The Second Avenue El ran northeast from City Hall, connecting at Chatham Square, due northeast and east until Houston Street, then north on First Avenue to 23rd Street, east to Second Avenue, and finally, north on Second Avenue until the Harlem River.

nearest the tracks endured "nineteen hours or more of incessant rumbling day and night."[15]

South of Kip's Bay was a neighborhood known as the Gashouse District; it became so-named with the erection of the first gashouse in 1842 at the East River and 21st Street. Many companies followed suit by building large gas storage containers, extending the district as far north as 27th Street.[16] Leaking gas drenched the neighborhood's soil, while its smell permeated the air, travelling many blocks north, south, east and west.

Kips Bay changed a great deal from its farmland days.[17] By 1890, it had become a sooty, smelly and dark neighborhood with no public green space.[18] Its condition was so undesirable that only the poorest were willing to live there; they moved into the tenements that replaced rowhouses, earlier estates and farms, packing themselves in densely. Given the conditions, it is no surprise that the Committee on Small Parks sited the City Health Department's 1896 statistics that 99.8 of every one thousand children, under the age of five, died in the twenty-first ward. To offer these children a healthier childhood, as well as a positive distraction for the gang member boys, Hewitt and his Committee on Small Parks argued for a neighborhood park in their ward.

8.42 Park Plan

Samuel Parsons' plan for St. Gabriel's Park represented a significant shift away from the picturesque park. Under significant pressure from playground reformers, Parsons designed this park for levels and types of recreation. To design the park, Parsons consulted the guidelines of the Amateur Athletic Union for criteria on dimensions, materials and specifications for anything

[15] Clifton Hood, *722 Miles: the Building of the Subways and How they Transformed New York*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, 2004, 53.

[16] Federal Writers Project, *New York City Guide,* New York: Random House, 1939, 183.

[17] Mr. Kips house, the oldest house extant in the city in 1851, was torn down the same year to make room for new roads drawn on the commissioners' grid; Federal Writers Project, 123.

[18] Federal Writers Project, 184.

athletic that he implemented into the park.[19] He later described the running tracks of the boy's outdoor gymnasiums in St Gabriel's Park; he had installed a 528 linear foot track (measured sixteen inches from the center rail), which required the parks athletes to run around the track ten times to run a mile.[20] At the same time, Parsons continued to maintain some elements of landscaped park design in this park. In 1907, he planted hundreds of trees in the small parks; in St. Gabriel's Park alone, he planted fifty-five American elms, three Norway maples and two American lindens.[21] In photographs, we see that they were planted along the park borders and outside the running track. [Figure 8.420]

[Figure 8.420] "Second Avenue El, 1929," showing trees and shrubs planted along the park and running track's perimeter, *Digital Murray Hill*, http://library.gc.cuny.edu/murrayhill/items/show/191

Parsons was not fond of the ennobling bathhouses built in the small parks. The year that St. Gabriel's Park opened (1906), in a presentation to his fellow landscape architects, Parson's discussed the reformers and their baths in small parks:

> They want to make elaborate, expensive buildings for shelter and baths, the value of which I question very much … whether these baths are just the things to have in the park. I think their place is not in the park, but in the city, just outside the park…we will sometimes have a hundred baths and two or three hundred people in there in the morning in this crowded

[19] William Curtis founded the Amateur Athletic Union in 1888, in an effort to standardize uniformity in amateur sports and sporting equipment.

[20] *Annual Report 1908*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 71-72.

[21] *Annual Report 1907*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 56.

> section… we will probably give up making buildings for baths and use parks for athletic games and playing.[22]

Parsons must have prevailed in St. Gabriel's Park, as no bathhouse was built there, nor would the park have even a comfort station for many years. Instead, pre-made outdoor gynmnasium equipment was ordered and installed in the park. Parsons alluded to a Chicago company that manufactured the "teeters, swings, and slides," noting that some of these products are quite good.[23] Because there were no building permits issued for construction in St. Gabriel's Park before 1924, nor are there drawings extant of the park's early buildings, we must rely instead upon photographs, Parks Department's minutes and reports for parks descriptions.

In 1905, when Parsons was preparing the site for a playground, he reported on the work to the Commissioners. It is interesting to note the he has divided the space between the younger children's playground, and the older children's gymnasium, as almost equally distributed.

> The area of this park is not quite 3 acres… it was laid out on the lines of the more modern city parks. Playgrounds and gymnasium features were introduced, while the park treatment formed the borderline. A site was determined upon and the place reserved for a comfort station. Plans were prepared … but work was not begun. The playgrounds are approximately 14,300 square feet, the running track is 10 laps to a mile, and the area of the gymnasium grounds proper is 15,214 sq. feet. These grounds are to be fully equipped with modern gymnasium apparatus and playground fixtures. [24] [Figure 8.421]

A 1906 entry in the Parks Department's *Annual Report* described the playground and recreational equipment, on site for the park's October 4, 1906 opening. The Pavilion that he mentioned must be the wood structure, that seems very similar to the other wood structures in the park, suggesting that the pavilion was a mail order modular building as well. [Figure 8.422]

> …fully one thousand children, boys and girls crowded in on the grounds. The new features in this playground are a large slide and old-fashioned see-saws, swings for the

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[22] Samuel Parsons, Jr., "Small City Parks," Meeting: March 6, 1906, *Transactions of the American Society of Landscape Architects, 1899-1908*, 78.

[23] Ibid.

[24] *Annual Report 1905*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 43.

> older children, baby swings for little ones, a sand box about 12 feet in diameter, prettily located near the pavilion, one tether pole and one giant stride. Material also for ball games, tennis, racing pins, potato racing, dumb bells, volley and the kindergarten are found in this very condensed playground.[25]

Nineteen days later, the boy's gymnasium opened, and was described in the same *Annual Report* entry as "well equipped with the necessary apparatus for a good gymnasium, together with a fine running track." With the opening of the new playground park, three park attendants were hired as supervisors; two to oversee the playground and one for the gymnasium.[26]

[Figure 8.421] "St Gabriel's Playground: General View," *Annual Report 1908*, Department of Parks, 86.

[Figure 8.422] Sand House & Pavilion, St. Gabriel's Park, c. 1911
Archive: Photographs, Parks Department, City Of New York

In a presentation on the small parks, Parsons told his fellow landscape architects, that the land for the park was being "taken" from Second Avenue down "to the water," so that they could make a park "through to the river." But, while the city negotiated for the land and the park, the

[25] *Annual Report 1906*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 42.
[26] Ibid, 42.

owner of several lots in Block 967 started building factory and storage facilities for what became the Liquid Carbonic Acid Manufacturing Company.[27] In 1928, the block's remaining lots were absorbed into the New York Steam Corporation's Kips Bay Station, ensuring that there would be no view of the river from St. Gabriel's Park for many years.[28] [Figure 8.423, 8.424]

[Figure 8.423] "Liquid Carbonic Manufacturing Company," George W and Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of NY, Borough of Manhattan, Vol. II,* Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1909, Revised 1912.

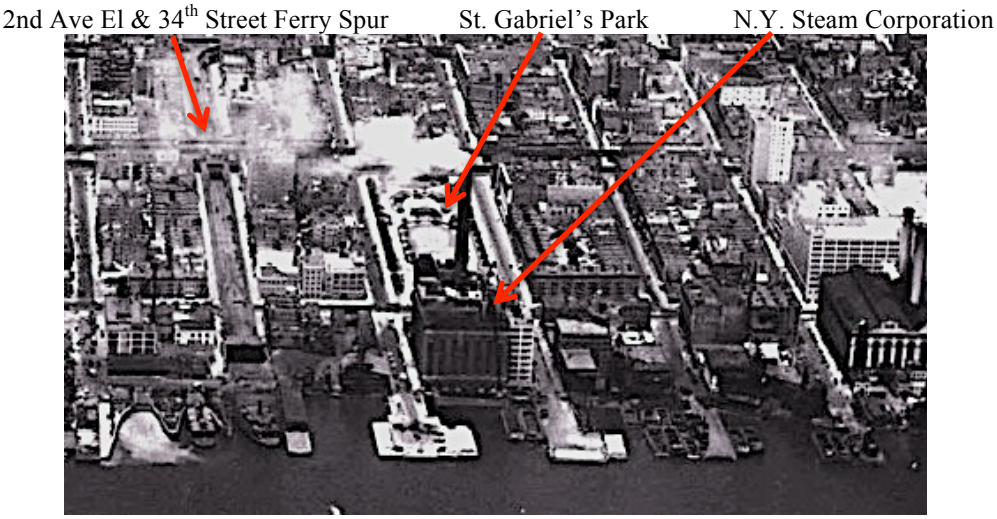
To date, no drawings of Parsons' landscape plan for St. Gabriel's park has surfaced. He was the Landscape Architect for the Parks Department when this site was acquired, and, in that capacity, was obligated to design the city's new parks; therefore, it is safe to assume that the plan for St. Gabriel's Park was Parsons'. The earliest existing plan of the park is unsigned and undated, and is most likely a rough surveyor's plan. [Figure 8.425] Because it includes the comfort station on the eastern side of the park, it must have been drawn after 1925, when the Parks Department's Chief Engineer Gastavo J. Steinacher obtained the building permit for his design of the new St. Gabriel's Park comfort station. Note that this plan includes a central

[27] "New Building Permit # 454 for a $50,000 6-story brick factory, 46.3 x 100, Anderson Estate, 27 William, Frank H. Quimby, Architect, 99 Nassau St., 1901;" "New Building Permit #1098 for a $7,900 3 story brick gas holder, 30 x 30, Anderson Estate, Owner for Liquid Carbonic Acid Manufacturing Company, 25 Broad Street, Chicago, IL; Frank Quimby, Architect, 99 Nassau, 1901;" "New Building Permit #949 for a $1,000 round tank, concrete base for Liquid Carbonic Company, 1909," All: *Building Records*, Department of Buildings, City of New York.

[28] "New Building Permit #314, $2,500,000 1 story brick steam power plant, 188' x 151', with 5-ply waterproofing & tile roof, Owner, N.Y. Steam Corporation, James D. Burd, President, 280 Madison Avenue, Architect, Thomas E. Murray, 55 Duane, 1926;" "New Building Permit #538, $160,000 9-story brick office, storage and manufacturing building, 122' x 46'416-26 E. 36th Street, Owner, New York Steam Corporation, D.C. Johnson, President, 280 Madison Avenue, 1928," All: *Building Records,* Department of Building, City of New York.

gymnasium, a children's playground, and the comfort station on the far eastern portion of the park.[29] Landscaping remains only on the park's perimeters and completely encased in fencing.

With the opening of St Gabriel's Park, Parsons and the commissioners created the *Rules Governing Playgrounds and Gymnasia*. These were employee and administration rules and guidelines; there were no rules on behavior for children who used the park.[30] The attendants were to signal the daily opening and closing of the park by raising a flag (the type of flag was not specified); they were to be on time for work and not be absent; they were to care for the park's equipment and make sure it was properly stowed each day; and, they were not to allow any formal exhibitions without the former approval of the Parks Commissioner.[31]

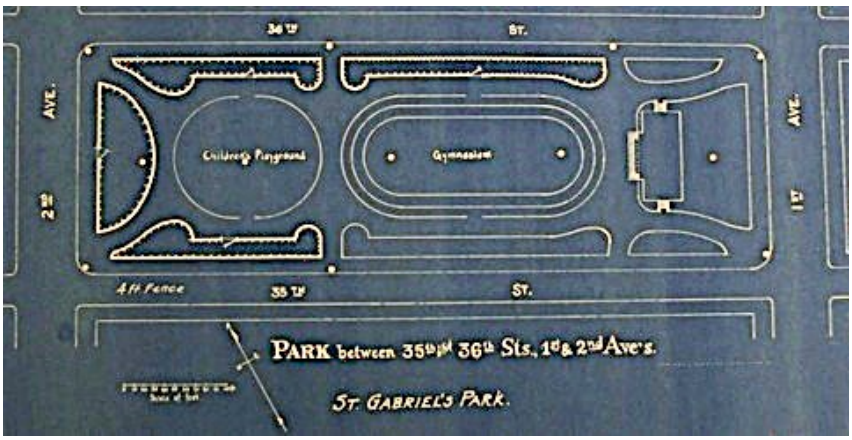


[Figure 8.424] Aerial view: East River & Manhattan shore, 33nd St to 39th St, with the Second Ave El, 34th St Ferry Spur, New York Steam Company and St. Gabriel's Park, c.1924; Photo: Charles Warren Private Collection

[29] "New Building Permit # 86, for a $25,000 1-story brick field house and comfort station, St. Gabriel's Park, 53' x 25', Gustavo J. Steinacher, 1925," *Building Records*, Department of Building, City of New York.

[30] *Annual Report 1906*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 45.

[31] *Annual Report 1906*, 46.



[Figure 8.425] Plan: St. Gabriel's Park (1925-36), *Municipal Archives, Department of Records*, City of N Y.

After the playground park had been opened for a year, it was suggested in the 1908 *Annual Report* that the Department instruct its attendants to encourage natural play among any children who might visit the park. Organized play that might recreate the tension and rigidity of their classrooms was to be avoided. Instead, the children were to be taught how to use the park's apparatus, and the attendants were to make sure that no one child monopolized the play equipment, while also ensuring that the children did not hurt themselves.[32]

1908 also saw the first year of interpark athletic competitions for the children of St Gabriel's Park. They even hosted a meet on June 19th.[33] One of Charles Stover's first acts as Parks Commissioner was to establish the Bureau of Recreation, to which he appointed long time playground advocate William J. Lee the Supervisor. Lee expanded the inter-park athletic competitions, and he set up clearer definition of playgrounds and their functions. First, he classified the playgrounds by their typologies: A) athletic fields, B) baseball fields, C) boys' playgrounds, D) girls' playgrounds and E) midget playgrounds (for children under the age of 4). Of these, St. Gabriel's had classifications A, D, & E. The park attracted over 1800 people per

[32] *Annual Report 1908*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 71-72.
[33] *Annual Report 1908*, 77.

day all summer in 1910.[34] In addition to Lee's improvements, 1910 was the first year that free concerts were brought to St Gabriel's Park.

Even though multiple discussions were held during parks commissioners meetings about erecting a comfort station in St Gabriel's Park, and $15,000 was included as a line item for the comfort station in the Park's 1915 budget, the station was not built until 1925.[35] Gustavo Steinacher, the Parks Department's chief engineer, applied for a building permit for a "one story brick field house and comfort station with an asphalt roof, fifty-three feet by twenty-two feet" in 1924. He filed the same application in 1925, with one minor difference: the building's width had increased three feet.[36] [Figure 8.426]

[Figure 8.426] G. Steinacher, *Field House & Comfort Station: St. Gabriel's Park 1925,* Photo: J. Frazer, 2012.

With Steinarcher's field house, the Parks Department no longer hired celebrated architects to design buildings for the small parks; instead of high-end materials like marble and stone, they move to a more cost-effective model of design, where their staff engineer or staff architect's focus would be on durability, materials and efficiency.

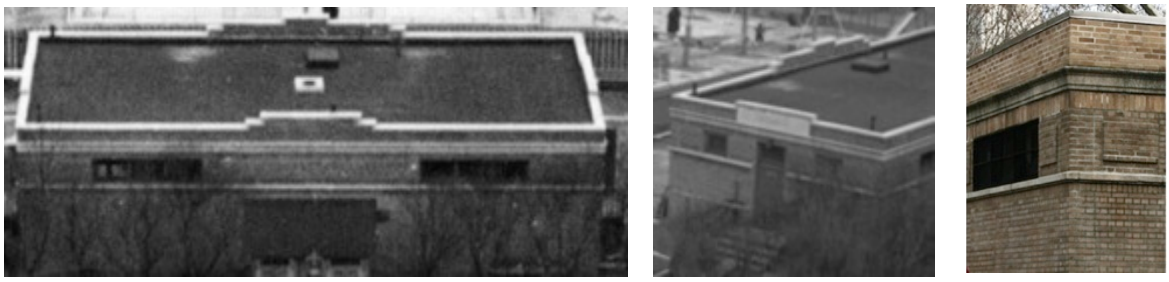
Though efficient, Steinacher was clever; his extant brick and cast stone field house in St

[34] *Annual Report 1910*, Department of Parks, City Of New York.

[35] *Annual Report 1915*, Department of Parks, City of New York.

[36] New Building Permit 86, 1925: $25k1-story Brick Fieldhouse & Comfort Station, St. Gabriel's Park, 73' W. of 1st Ave & 72' N of East 35th Street, 53'x 25', Gustavo J. Steinacher, Municipal Building, Dept. of Parks, City of NY.

Gabriel's Park was not a temple like the bathhouses in Seward Park and DeWitt Clinton Park, but it was a modern, pared-down version with minimized classical elements. Highly symmetrical, with centered double doors, flanked by double-hung windows and then, triple-wide casement windows, its entrance was elevated on a three-step high platform that hints at a plinth. The brick is laid in courses of English bond (alternating headers and stretchers) with a single corbel of cast stone about two thirds up the height of the wall; this corbel encirles the entire length of the façade on all elevations while it doubles as a ledge for the two triple sash windows each on the park and First Avenue elevations, and for the two double sashed windows on both the north and south elevatations. Above the windows is another cast-stone course that resembles a simple crown modling; it too encircles the building's facade; the two courses of cast-stone frame the windows and in between them, rectangular brick extrusions. Using no extra material, the extrusions ornament the otherwise blank space between the windows. The cornice today is flat, but when new, had a stepped up center ornament, on all four elevations, probably also in cast -tone. [Figure 8.427] A 1935 parks plan indicates alterations were made to the field house that year, and new iron fencing was placed around the park's perimeter. This fencing is extant, to the field house's north, south and east. A brick cornice was added, atop the cast-stone molding.



[Figure 8.427] "St. Gabriels Park 1937," *Archives: Photographs, Department of Parks, City of New York.*

Although ramps were added at some point to make the structure wheelchair accessible, with the exception of the altered cornice, the field house is preserved largely as it was when it was built in 1925. Steinacher took a simple building and with the use of alternating brick and

cast-stone courses, he created a classicized, but simple, modern structure.

The 1930s brought dramatic change to St. Gabriel's Park. During the Great Depression, fresh fruits and vegetables were rare for many of the city's chidren. To help, farm gardens were begun in several of ithe city's small parks. During World War I, the Federal Government had appropriated the idea of DeWitt Clinton Park's farm school into a national program to promote patriotic "school garden armies." In the program, young people were encouraged to focus on the country's natural bounty by growing their own produce. [Figure 8.428, 8.429] This concept was re-introduced during the Depression and World War II, so that in July 1931, a farm garden was created on St. Gabriel's Park's eastern end; more than 5,000 children participated in the park's gardening effort that year.[37] [Figure 8.4200, 8.4201]

[Figure 8.428] *Join the United States School Garden Army* Edward Penfield, New York: American Lithographic Co., 1918. Source: Library of Congress.

[Figure 8.429] Children's School Victory Gardens 1st Ave. between 35th & 36th St Edward Meyer, Source: Library of Congress

[37] *Annual Report 1931*, Department of Parks, City of New York, 70-71.

[Figure 8.4200] Bird's Eye View: Looking North From First Avenue & 35th Street, 1937

[Figure 8.4201] St. Gabriel's Farm Garden, First Avenue 1937

Both: *Archives: Photographs, Department of Parks, City of New York*

8.43 Renovation

In 1934, with the exception of the field house addition, St Gabriel's Park was still as Parsons designed it, with a running track and gymnasium in its center and the playground's circular arrangement of buildings surrounding what became a rather pitted play area.[Figure 8.430, 8.431, 8.432] Between 1936 and 1938, the Parks Department, under Commissioner Moses, renovated the park, adding a new wading pool just west of the field house. Gilmore Clarke led the design team as the Parks Department's consulting landscape architect.[38]

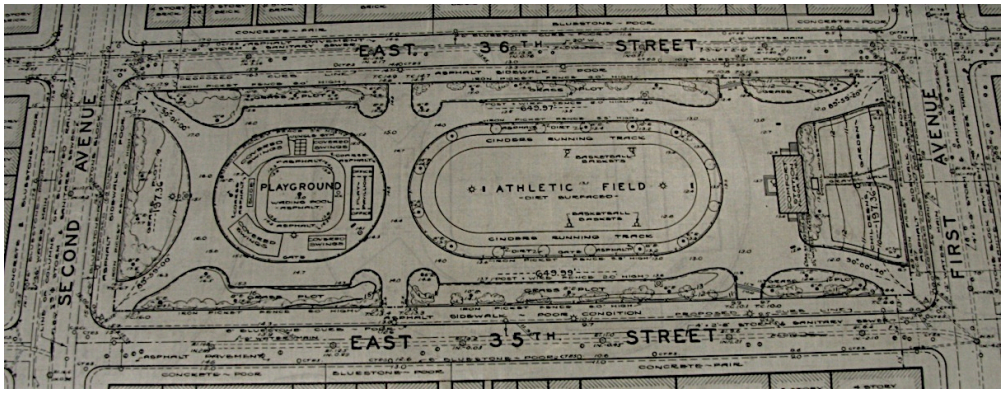
[Figure 8.430] Pavilion: St Gabriel's Park

Bird's Eye View of Old Equipment

Both: St Gabriel's Park, pre-renovation, August 1934, *Archives: Photographs, Parks Department, City of New York*

[38] As noted in previous chapters, Cornell University graduate Gilmore Clarke was both civil engineer and landscape architect, who would later return to Cornell as Dean of their Graduate School of Architecture.

[Figure 8.431] St. Gabriel's Park, Pre-Renovation, 1931-6: A. Payser & A. Patzig, David Stravitz, *New York: Empire City 1920-45,* New York: H. N. Abrams, Inc., 2004, 35.

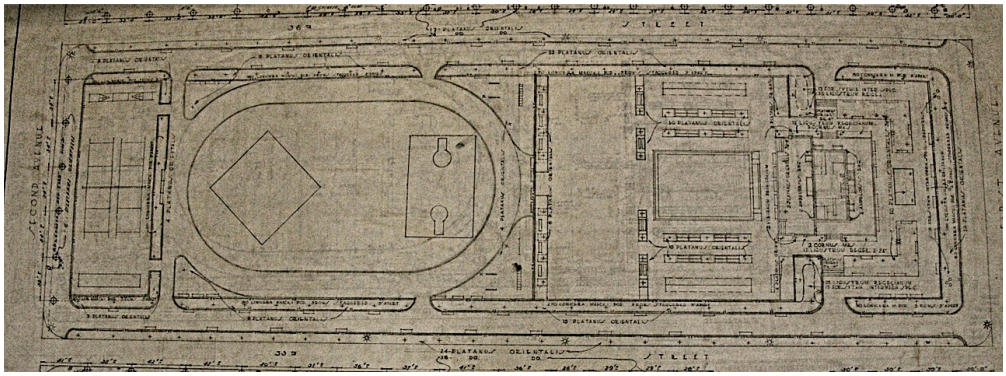


[Figure 8.432] Topographical Map: St Gabriel's Park 1934, *Map Archives: Department of Parks*, New York City

In the renovated park plan, the wading pool was centered just west of the field house and flanked by double allees of trees to the north and south of the pool. [Figure 8.433, 8.434] The trees are still in the park today, although some of them have had to be replaced over time. On either side of the trees were located playground equipment, most particularly, long swing sets

were set along the fence lines. The running track and athletic field were relocated further west in the park, while the track was surfaced to be used as either a running or roller skaing track. Inside the track was added a new basketball court, and a softball field. On the far west end of the park, new handball and raquetball courts were installed, as well as shuffleboard and horseshoe pitches.

[Figure 8.433] "St. Gabriel's Park: View West from Power House Roof,"
By Alajos Schuszler, February 23, 1937, Photo Archives: Department of Parks, City of New York

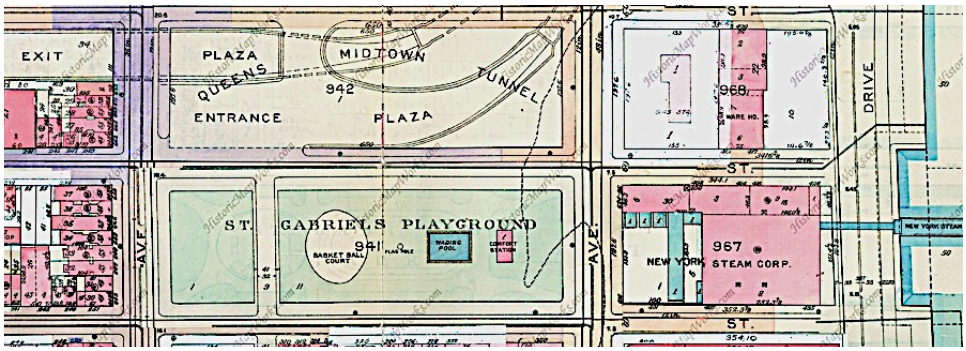


[Figure 8.434] "Planting Plan: St Gabriel's Park, 1936; Gilmore D. Clarke, Consulting Landscape Architect,"
Map Archives: Department of Parks, New York City.

8.44 Destruction in the Park

Not long after the completion of the park renovation in 1938, the Board of Estimate sought the release of nearly a quarter acre of land from St. Gabriel's Park so that they could turn

it over to the New York City Tunnel Authority; with the land, they create a northbound Queens Midtown Tunnel access road. The road was sited on about one third of the park's length, due east, from Second Avenue; with it, the park was split into two sections and straddled what quickly became a very high traffic road. To "compensate" their neighborhod for the damage to their park, the Tunnel Authority agreed to improve "nearby" parks and playgrounds around 42nd Street, about six blocks north. The effect on the park was disastrous, as the smaller severed portion of the park became inaccessible to children without their having to cross through very busy traffic. In addition, fumes from idling cars waiting to enter the tunnel filled the park.



[Figure 8.440] "St. Gabriel's Park," Bromley, George W & Walter S., *Atlas of the City of New York, Borough of Manhattan, Volume II*, Philadelphia, G.W. Bromley & Co., 1928, Revised 1962, Plate 023

Removed with St. Gabriel's Park's land was the entire block north of the park. Gone with that block were St. Gabriel's Church, its parochial school and the public library's St. Gabriel's Park Branch. Designed by McKim, Mead & White, this was one of only five branch libraries in the city with an open-air rooftop reading room.[39] Since 1859, St. Gabriel's Church had produced two of the seven Roman Catholic Church's American Cardinals: Archbishops Patrick Cardinal Hayes, and James Cardinal Farley.[40] Despite the block's important history and architecture, it was razed to construct the Queens Midtown Tunnel entrance. [Figure 8.441, 8.442, 8.443]

[39] "Open Air Libraries for the City's Poor," *New York Times*, April 24, 1910.

[40] Federal Writers Project, *New York City Guide,* New York: Random House, 1939, 209.

[Figure 8.441] Carnegie Gift: Façade 1928
Museum of the City of New York

Both: St. Gabriel's Park Branch Library
Roof Reading Room 1910
Photo: Lewis W. Hines
New York Public Library

[Figure 8.442] St. Gabriel's Church, 1859
Digital Murray Hill Mina Rees Library
The Graduate Center, CUNY
http://library.gc.cuny.edu/murrayhill/items/show/44

The Midtown Tunnel was a grand project designed by New York Tunnel Authority's Chief Engineer Oleg Singstad and funded with $58 billion in grants and loans from the Public Works Administration. Singstad had planned to someday connect the tunnel, under the city, to the Lincoln Tunnel, which he also designed, but in 1967, two years before his death, he said, "I think we've overdone it. The city is choking itself to death with cars…we should build more subways…and more rail tunnels under both the Hudson and East Rivers."[41]

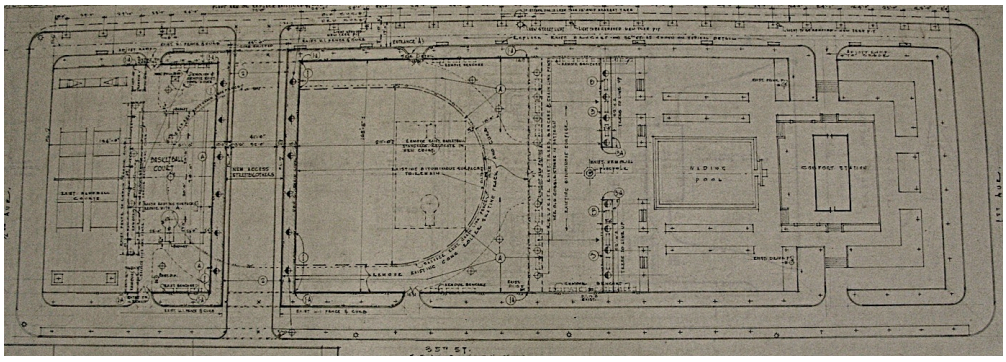
[Figure 8.443] St. Gabriel's Library is alone (park on the left). From First Avenue, looking at the razed block, 36th to 37th Streets, First to Second Avenues., El in the rear, Nathan Schwartz, 1939, New York Public Library.

[41] Albin Krebs, "Ole Singstad, 87, Master Builder of Underwater Tunnels, is Dead," *New York Times*, 12.09.1969.

The tunnel was completed in 1940, but the removal of a quarter acre of land from the park destroyed its recent renovation and cut through its running & rollerskating tracks and its softball field. Given that the park was split into two separate pieces, it required some re-design. [Figure 8.444] The park's plan in 1940 was not nearly as elaborate as the 1938 plan.

The roller skating track, the large half circle in plan, was removed, while the basketball courts were moved west of the tunnel access, to be rebuilt next to the recent racquetball courts. To save as many trees as possible, Parks employees moved those that dotted the original western half of the park to the perimeters along the tunnel's access drive. The entire surface of the park from its original midpoint, west to the tunnel access drive, and then again, on the mini-portion of the park further west of the tunnel access, was paved in asphalt. Only the portion of the park with the wading pool, field house and farming gardens remained unchanged.

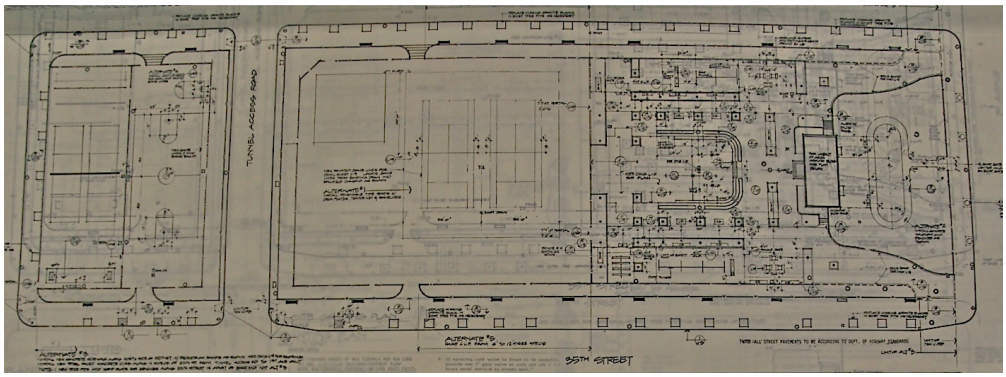
With the construction of the tunnel and the demolition of the park's namesake, the Parks Department decided to rename the park for St. Vartan's Armenian Church built in 1966-68, on the southwest corner of East 35th Street and the tunnel access road. The park's name was changed to St. Vartan's Park on May 5th, 1978.



[Figure 8.444] Revisions to St. Gabriel's Park, Due to Midtown Tunnel Construction, 1939
Map Archives: Department of Parks, New York City

Most of the city parks experienced deterioration during the 1960s and 1970s, as the city struggled in economic downturns. St. Vartan's Park would not be refurbished again until 1983-

84, when in a joint public-private partnership, the Gluck Corporation contributed $900,000 to the renovation of the park. Balsey Landscape Architects designed the new plan. [Figure 8.445]



[Figure 8.445] St Vartan's Park Reconstruction, Site Plan, 1983, *Map Archives: Department of Parks*, City of NY

Balsey changed the wading pool into a spray shower amphitheater and retained the allees of trees as well as the field house. 9,200 shrubs were planted throughout the park, but following Parsons, confined mostly to the perimeters. Taking their cue from Clarke, they sited new playground equipment on either side of the allees and then, added a brightly colored large play-ground in the park's center, just west of the amphitheater. New safety surfaces were installed under all playgrounds in the park. Lastly, the field house interior was divided into two sections and refurbished; half became a pre-school, and the other half, a senior community center.

8.45 Conclusion

St Gabriel's/St Vartan's Park is an important early example of an all-playground small park. Though it was severely compromised with the bisection imposed on the park by the tunnel entrance, the park still serves an important function to its neighborhood. For parks and landscape preservationists, this park serves as a warning for diligence in the protection of our parklands.

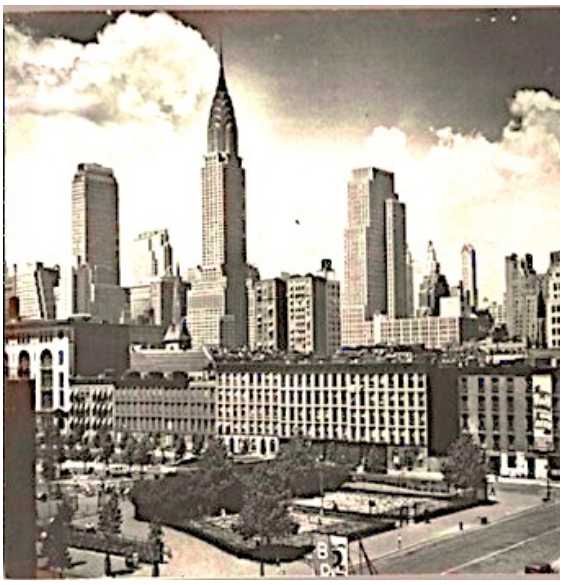
Very little of this park remains from its original plan; the landscape plan still follows Parsons' general idea with its trees and foliage fenced in along the park's perimeters. The wooden playground pavilion that Parsons ordered from Chicago was removed in 1938. But, Steinacher's 1925 brick field house is extant, and in remarkably good condition. So too are

Clarke's allees of trees that now frame the spray shower amphitheater. The iron fencing installed surrounding the park in the 1938 renovation is still present in the eastern end of the park, on First Avenue and East 35th and 36th Streets. Given that the fence, the field house and the trees are original materials and historically important to this park, it is highly recommended that any future plans in this park incorporate an enthusiastic effort to preserve all of these elements.

Finally, this park is important as a member of the collection of small parks generated from the 1887 Small Parks Act. Therefore, extra care should be taken to both preserve its elements and to insure that no further land be subtracted from the park.

Allees of Trees, looking east to west, and south to north, Spray Shower and Amphitheater with Empire State Building in the background, 1935 iron fencing, just inside southeastern corner gate, looking east. Photos: J. Frazer

Architectural Giants Rising Over St. Gabriel's Park
Federal Writers Project, *New York Panorama: A Comprehensive View of the Metropolis,* NY: Random House, 1938



St Gabriel's Park, East 36th st, 1939
Digital Murray Hill, Mina Rees Library
The Graduate Center, City University of New York
http://library.gc.cuny.edu/murrayhill/items/show/184

St. Vartan's Cathedral, behind basketball and racketball courts; Midtown Tunnel Acess between park segments

Asphalt play area, east of tunnel access road; looking south. Same play area, looking north. Photos: Jennifer Frazer

9.0 Conclusion: Recommendations for Preservation

As historic preservationists, we typically focus on the preservation of structures. The preservation of landscape is a much more challenging endeavor, because land, by its very nature, changes over time. To preserve a combination of landscape and structures, especially where this combination has been, and will remain, used by an ever-changing public with ever-changing demands, presents a unique challenge and opportunity for historic preservationists. If elements can be identified within these eight parks that are worthy of preservation, and we want to ensure that those elements are preserved, how do we go about achieving that goal? How can we ensure that the public who use these parks and who may want to learn about their unique origins, designers and histories have access to that information?

These are challenges that all preservationists experience, but with pubic parks, a new layer of separation develops between the knowledge of the parks' importance and history and the current park designers, architects, and users. With a park, unlike with a building, it is much easier to not acknowledge or investigate the work of others who have come before us before we implement changes.

These eight parks discussed in this thesis have eight distinctly different histories, yet they had one common goal in their inception: with their creation, the gift of light, air and health was brought to the most crowded poor neighborhoods of late nineteenth and early twentieth century New York City. Carl Schurz Park was the one exception built in a less dense neighborhood. In each of these eight parks there are buildings or landscapes or both worthy of preservation, and perhaps even designation as official landmarks. As a collection of small urban parks created under the Small Parks Act, they possess historical importance to the city of New York and to the nation, as they represent early parks in the small urban parks movement. As reform parks, they

represent a time, over one hundred years ago, when city leaders felt that they could improve the lives of the city's poorest by bringing green space within their neighborhoods. They also represent a time when the general population was willing to allocate resources to improving the lives of the mostly immigrant poor who lived in these neighborhoods. By World War I, and then, after the Immigration Act of 1924, tightening economies and nativist attitudes would often circumvent any generosity towards the immigrant poor, so these parks, and the high-minded generosity that they represent, speak to an important time in our history when we believed as a community, a city, a people, and a nation, that if we invested enough of ourselves, we could really make a difference and improve dramatically, the lives of others.

Each of these eight parks was designed by a well-known landscape architect or architect. Most of these parks originally held a structure that was designed by a well-known architect, or was associated with historically important person or people. Each of these parks has at least one element original to the park's origin. Most of these parks have been dramatically changed, but most of them still possess the land close to their original footprint. Those parks that have had swaths of the park's land removed should speak loudly to preservationists on the importance of preservation as a safeguard to our city's treasures.

Appendix C of this thesis contains a discussion on Cultural Landscapes as a method of designation or protection of sites that include community parks, with character defining features that contribute to a landscape's physical appearance over time. Some of those features may include topography, circulation, fountains, water features, paths, steps, walls, buildings, fences benches, lights and sculptures. A cultural landscape is the combination of landscape, buildings, and all of the features included in the property, as well as its history or association with important events. According to the National Park Service, United States Department of the

Interior, there are four different types of cultural landscapes, three of which are named here:

1. **Historic Designed Landscape:** all eight of these parks possess this characteristic; some still have some elements of their original design.

2. **Historic Vernacular Landscape:** the landscape evolves over time based on the community's interaction with it, and demands of it. Parks that shifted from a naturalistic or Beaux-Arts design into recreational parks speak to this concept because their changes represented the shift from the architect's uplifting ideals as designed for the people to the people's response and their demand for the recreational park.

3. **Historic Site:** the landscape is associated with an historic event or person. Fannie Parson's Farm School, Mulberry Bend's notorious poverty, Gracie Mansion's mayors.

These small parks were part of the larger small parks movement in the United States. This occurred as cities were expanding rapidly with the influx of immigrants pouring in from other countries, and city administrators thought to set aside small neighborhood areas where no building was allowed and where the land could only be used as a "breathing space." If the parks areas were on the outskirts of the cities, than as the cities expanded with the population growth, the parks became part of a more densely populated neighborhood.

New York's collection of small parks was created very early in the small parks movement, and served as a model to other cities for how to go about creating their own small parks. Chicago was another leader in this movement, as well as with their settlement house movement. New York City's parks, however, stands out for the quality and uniqueness of their designs, for the notoriety of their landscape architects and architects. Nationally known architects designed their pavilions, bathhouses and recreation houses. Architects and landscape architects were every bit the reformer that people in other industries and occupations sought to be, but architecture and landscape architecture was so much more visible, and therefore, had so much more impact on those they sought to reform than most any other type of reform work.

Therefore, it is the proposal of this thesis that this collection of eight small parks, created

under the Small Parks Act of 1887, all designed by nationally known landscape architects and nationally known architects; all embodiments of the high ideals capable of a people, city and nation that believe in its own power to positively improve and change the lives of its fellow citizens for the good of the whole population; all containing rich heritages and histories of not only the Parks Department and their designers, but of the people who used the parks and the many ways in which they interacted with their parks; and all containing at least one historic element that can serve to remind us of the layers of history contained within their borders, should be designated as a collection of Cultural Landscapes important to the history of the nation, and the city of New York. Designated as a collection of historically important Cultural Landscapes in the city's and nation's heritage, their oversight and protection is imperative and important.

In addition to the proposal of a cultural landscapes collection of these eight small parks, this thesis also recommends the designation of specific buildings, structures or elements within the eight small parks by the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission. Each of these buildings or structures were noted within their respective chapters, and each are worthy of designation as city landmark, and all the protection and oversight included with that designation:

> Firemen's Memorial: James J. Walker Park, 1834.
> Pavilion: Columbus/Mulberry Bend Park, 1897, Howard & Cauldwell, Architects.
> Wall and Fence: James J. Walker Park, 1898, Carrère & Hastings, Architects,
> Jacob Schiff Fountain, William H. Seward Park, 1899, Arnold W. Brunner, Architect
> Field House: John Jay Park, 1914, Jaroslav Kraus, Architect
> Pavilion: St. Vartan's Park, 1915, Gustavo Steinacher, Engineer
> Recreation Building-Comfort Station: Columbus Park, 1936, Aymar Embury II, Architect
> Pool: James J. Walker/Hudson Park, 1938-39, Aymar Embury II, Architect
> Recreation Center: Carl Schurz Park, 1940, Aymar Embury II, Architect
> Pavilion: William H. Seward Park, 1941, Aymar Embury II, Architect
> And, in four more years:
> Mural: James J. Walker/Hudson Park, 1987, Keith Haring, Mural Artist & AIDS Activist

This is an important collection of structures and elements in a collection of small parks important to the history of New York City and the country. Embedded in the last one hundred

and sixteen years of these parks are stories of generations of people, many whom came to New York with nothing in their pockets, never to see their homeland again, and willing to start over to reinvent themselves so that their children and their children's children could have a better life. These parks were an important element of the city giving them a chance to prosper and even more so, they are representative of those who took advantage of the resources made available to them (parks, bathhouses, schools, libraries), and used them to invest in their own futures. The parks serve as testimony to a time when a city of people reached out to help its own. All that remains preservable within these parks, and the parks as a whole and a collection, should be preserved to remind us of our own capacity for this kind of comprehensive kindness and generosity.

Appendix A: The Small Parks Act and its Relevant Amendments

Chapter 320, Laws of the State of New York, Passed May 13, 1887 at the 110th Session of the Legislature in the City of Albany; Albany: Banks & Brothers, Publishers, 1887, 311-317.

CHAP. 320.

AN ACT to provide for the location, acquisition, construction and improvement of additional public parks in the city of New York.

PASSED May 13, 1887; three-fifths being present

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Authority conferred to lay out parks.

SECTION 1. The board of street opening and improvement of the city of New York is hereby authorized and empowered to select, locate and lay out such and so many public parks in the city of New York, south of One Hundred and Fifty-fifth street, as the said board may from time to time determine. It shall be lawful for the said board, and for all persons acting under its authority and by its direction to enter in the day time into and upon any and all lands, tenements and hereditaments which said board shall deem necessary to be surveyed, used or converted for the laying out, surveying and monumenting of any parks so selected as aforesaid, and the said board shall cause two similar maps or plans and profiles of the said parks to be made showing the location and boundaries of such parks accompanied with such field notes and explanatory remarks as the nature of the subject shall require, which maps, plans and profiles, together with such notes and remarks shall be certified to by the chairman of said board, or by one of the members thereof designated by said board for that purpose, before any person authorized by law to take acknowledgments of deeds within the county of New York, and shall be filed, one in the office of the register of the city and county of New York, and one in the department of public parks in said city. In the case of each park selected, located and laid out as herein provided, the said board of street opening and improvement shall have the power to determine, in its discretion, whether any, and if any, what proportion of the expense to be incurred in acquiring the land for such parks shall be assessed upon the property, persons and estates to be benefited by the acquisition and construction of such park, and in each case in which said board shall determine that any part of such expense shall be so assessed, the said board shall also determine the area within which such part of said expense shall be so assessed. If any street, avenue or public place, or any part of any street, avenue or public place shall be included within the limits of any park selected, located and laid out as herein provided, the said board of street opening and improvement shall have the power and is hereby authorized to close and discontinue the same so far as the same is included within the limits of such park. The surveys, maps, plans and profiles provided for in this section shall be done and made upon the requisition of the board of street opening and improvement, by the department of public parks, and the cost and expense thereof may be charged against and met and paid out of any appropriation made for said department, in the discretion of the board of parks.

Assessing expenses on property.

Closing streets.

Application to court at special term.

§ 2. Whenever, and as often as the said board of street opening and improvement shall determine, that any of the public parks, selected, located and laid out as hereinbefore provided, should be opened and the title to the lands embraced therein should be acquired by the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York for the purpose of such public parks, the said board, by the counsel to the corporation of said city, is hereby authorized to make application to a special term of the supreme court in and for the first department for the appointment of commissioners of estimate, and the said court shall thereupon name three discreet and disinterested persons, being citizens of the city of New York, as such commissioners of estimate for the purpose of performing the duties hereinafter mentioned in that behalf prescribed. Twenty days' notice of such application shall be published in the city record and in at least two other public newspapers published in the city of New York. The said board may in its discretion include in one proceeding an application for the opening of as many of the aforesaid parks as in the judgment of said board of public interests may require. Upon the appointment of said commissioners they shall severally take and subscribe an oath or affirmation, before some officer authorized to administer oaths, faithfully to perform the trusts and duties required of them by this act; which oath shall be annexed to and filed with their report, and it shall be the duty of said commissioners, after having viewed the said lands, tenements, hereditaments

Twenty days' notice.

Appointment of commissioners.

and premises required for the purpose of said park or parks, and the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises included within the area of assessment fixed and determined by the board of street opening and improvement as hereinbefore provided, if said board shall have fixed such an area, to make a just and equitable estimate of the loss and damage to the respective owners, lessees, parties and persons respectively entitled to or interested in the said lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises, and to make report thereof to the said supreme court without unnecessary delay. In each and every case in which the said board of street opening and improvement shall have determined that a portion of the expense to be incurred in acquiring the land for such parks shall be assessed upon the property, persons and estates to be benefited by the acquisition and construction of such park, the said commissioners of estimate shall make a just and equitable estimate and assessment of the loss and damage, if any, over and above the benefit and advantage, or of the benefit and advantage, if any, over and above the loss and damage, as the case may be, to the respective owners, lessees, parties and persons respectively entitled unto or interested in the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises so required for the purpose aforesaid, and a just and equitable estimate and assessment also of the value of the benefit and advantage of said public park to the respective owners, lessees, parties and persons, respectively, entitled unto or interested in the respective lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises embraced within the area of assessment fixed and determined as hereinbefore provided by said board of street opening and improvement and not required for the purpose of opening said public park.

Assessing benefited property.

§ 3. In each and all and every case and cases where the owners or parties interested, or their respective estates and interests are unknown, or not fully known to the said commissioners, it shall be sufficient for them to estimate and to set forth and state in their said reports in general terms, the respective sums to be allowed and paid to the owners and proprietors generally of such lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises, and parties interested therein, for the loss and damage to such owners, proprietors and parties interested in respect of the whole estate and interest of whomsoever may be entitled unto or interested in said lands, hereditaments and premises, respectively, by and in consequence of the taking the same for the purposes in this act provided, without specifying the names of the estate or interests of such owners, proprietors and parties interested, or either of them; and upon the coming of said report, signed by the said commissioners or a majority of them, the said supreme court shall, by order, upon the application of the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, after hearing any matter which may be alleged against the same, either confirm the said report, in whole or in part, or refer the same back to the same commissioners for revisal and correction, or to new commissioners to be appointed by the said court, to reconsider the subject-matter thereof, and the said commissioners, to whom the said report shall be so referred, shall return the said report corrected and revised, or a new report to be made by them, as aforesaid, in the premises, to the said court without unnecessary delay; and the same, on being so returned, shall be confirmed or again referred by the said court, as justice shall require; and such report, when confirmed by the said court, shall be final and conclusive as well upon the said mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, as upon the owners, lessees, persons and parties interested in and entitled to the lands, tenements,

Cases where owners unknown.

Commissioners' report.

hereditaments and premises mentioned in the said report, and also upon all other persons whomsoever. And on the final confirmation of said report, the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York shall become and be seized in fee of the lands included in said report, the same to be appropriated, converted and used to and for the aforesaid purposes accordingly; and thereupon the said mayor, aldermen and commonalty, by the department of public parks, shall immediately take possession of the same without any suit or proceeding at law for that purpose, and all leases and other contracts in regard to said land so taken or any part thereof, and all covenants, contracts or engagements between landlord and tenant, or any other contracting parties shall, upon the confirmation of such reports, respectively, cease and determine, and be absolutely discharged according to law.

Final confirmation.

§ 4. The said commissioners of estimate, at least thirty days before they present their report to the supreme court, shall deposit a true report or transcript of such estimate, in the office of the department of public parks of the city of New York, for the inspection of whomsoever it may concern, and shall give daily notice by advertisement in the newspapers mentioned in the second section of this act, for thirty days after depositing such report as aforesaid, of the said deposit thereof in the said office and of the day on which such report will be presented to the said court; and any person or persons whose rights may be affected thereby, and who may object to the same or any part

Copy of report to be filed before presentation to court.

Objections to report.

thereof, may within thirty days after the first publication of such notice, set forth their objections to the same in writing to the said commissioners, who shall, after hearing the parties so objecting, thereupon reconsider their said estimate and assessment, or the part or parts thereof so objected to, and in case the same shall appear to them to require correction, but not otherwise, they shall and may correct the same accordingly. The said mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York shall, within four calendar months after the confirmation of said report, pay to the parties entitled thereto the respective sum or sums so estimated and reported in their favor respectively, with lawful interest from the date of such confirmation, and in default thereof said persons or parties, respectively, his, her or their respective heirs, executors, administrators, successors or assigns may sue for and recover the same, with lawful interest from and after demand therefor, and the cost of suit.

Mayor, etc., to pay parties.

Owners who are infants; non compos mentis, feme covert or absentees.

§ 5. Whenever the owners and proprietors of any lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises to be taken for any of the purposes aforesaid, or the party or parties, person or persons interested therein, or any or either of them, the said owners, proprietors, parties or persons in whose favor any such sum or sums or compensation shall be so reported shall be under the age of twenty-one years, non compos mentis, feme covert or absent from the city of New York; and also in all cases where the name or names of the owner or owners, parties or persons entitled unto or interested in any lands, tenements, hereditaments or premises, that may be so taken for any of the purposes aforesaid, shall not be set forth or mentioned in the said report; or where the said owners, parties or persons respectively, being named therein, cannot upon diligent inquiry be found, it shall be lawful for the said mayor, aldermen and commonalty to pay the sum or sums mentioned in said report, payable or that would be coming to such owners, proprietors, parties and persons, respectively, into the supreme court, to be secured, disposed of, improved and paid out as the court sitting at general term for said district shall direct; and such payment shall be as valid and

Owner's name not set forth, or cannot be found, money to be paid into court.

effectual in all respects as if made to the said owners, proprietors, parties and persons, respectively, themselves, according to their just rights, if they had been known, and had all been present, of full age, discovert, and compos mentis; and provided, also, that in all and each and every case and cases where any such sum or sums or compensation so to be reported by the said commissioners in favor of any person or persons, party or parties, whatsoever, whether named or not named in said report, shall be paid to any person or persons, party or parties whatsoever, when the same shall of right belong and ought to have been paid to some other person or persons, party or parties, it shall be lawful for the person or persons, or party or parties to whom the said ought to have been paid, to sue for and recover the same, with lawful interest and costs of suit, as so much money had and received to his, her or their use, by the person or persons, party or parties, respectively, to whom the same shall have been so paid. The said commissioners shall include and set forth in their said report the name of the respective owners, lessees, parties and persons entitled unto or interested in the said report, and each and every part and parcel thereof, as far forth as the same shall be ascertained by them, and add a sufficient designation and description of such respective lands and parcels of land

Report, what to include.

aforesaid, and also the several respective sums estimated as and for the compensation and recompense or allowance to be made for the loss and damage of the respective owners of the fee or inheritance of such said lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises, respectively, and for the loss and damage of the respective owners of the leasehold estate, or their interest therein separately. And the said commissioners shall also include in said report the amount of their fees, and all costs and disbursements for expenses for services, maps and other things. Fees, etc.

§ 6. In case of the death, resignation or refusal to act of any such commissioner of estimate appointed as hereinbefore provided, it shall and may be lawful for the court aforesaid, or any one of the justices thereof, on the application of the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, as often as such event shall happen, to appoint a discreet and disinterested person, being a citizen of the said city of New York, in the place and stead of such commissioner so dying, resigning or refusing to act, and the surviving or acting commissioners, as the case may be, shall have full power to proceed in the execution of the duties of their appointment until a successor to the commissioner so dying, resigning or refusing to act shall be appointed. Death, resignation, etc., of commissioner.

§ 7. In each and every case of the appointment of commissioners under this act, it shall be competent and lawful for any two of such commissioners so appointed as aforesaid, to proceed to and execute and perform the trusts and duties of their said appointment, and their acts shall be as valid and effectual as the acts of all the commissioners so to be appointed if they had acted together would have been; and, further, in all cases the acts, proceedings and decisions of a major part of such of the commissioners as shall be acting in the premises, shall be as binding, valid and effectual as if the said commissioners named and appointed for such purposes had all concurred and joined therein. The commissioners appointed under and by virtue of this title, who shall enter upon the duties of their appointment shall each be entitled to receive such compensation as shall be awarded by the court upon the confirmation of their respective reports, not exceeding ten dollars for each day they shall respectively be actually employed in the duties of their appointment, besides all reasonable expenses, to be taxed and allowed by said court, for maps, surveys, clerk hire and other necessary Two commissioners may perform duties. Compensation.

expenses and disbursements, and the same shall be included in and considered and paid as part of the expense of acquiring the respective public parks.

§ 8. The respective sums so as aforesaid to be assessed by said commissioners upon the owners, occupants, and parties seized or possessed of or interested in the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises mentioned in the report of said commissioners, and reported by said commissioners as and for the allowance to be made by the parties and persons respectively in the said report mentioned or referred to, and intended as owners and proprietors of, or parties interested in lands and premises deemed to be benefited for the benefit and advantage to be derived from the acquisition and construction of said public park or parks mentioned in said report shall be a lien or charge on the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises in the said report mentioned, or upon the estate and interest of the respective owners, lessees, and parties interested in said lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises for or on account of which the said respective sums shall be so assessed by said commissioners upon the said respective owners and proprietors Assessments upon owners.

thereof, and parties interested therein. As well the said owners and proprietors thereof and parties interested therein, and also the occupants and each and every of them shall moreover be respectively liable to pay on demand the respective sum or sums or assessments mentioned in said report, at which the respective lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises so owned and occupied by him, her or them, or wherein he, she or they are so interested, or at which the owners or proprietors thereof shall be so assessed, to such person or persons as the comptroller of the city of New York shall appoint to receive the same. The said respective sums or assessments, with lawful interest from the date of the confirmation of the report, may be received with all costs and charges by action by the said mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, from and against the parties assessed, or the owner or owners of the respective lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises whereon, or in respect of which, the same may be assessed or set forth in the said report of the said commissioners, or from or against any or either of the said parties or owners, without joining any other or others of them the said parties or owners.

Care of parks.

§ 9. The department of public parks of the city of New York shall be vested and charged with the care, custody and construction of said parks, when the same shall have been acquired as hereinbefore provided, and shall be and hereby are authorized and empowered to construct the said parks in such manner, and to erect and furnish therein for public purposes, for the comfort, health and instruction of the people, such and so many buildings as the said department of public parks, with the concurrence of the board of estimate and apportionment, shall determine to be necessary and expedient.

Payment of expenses incurred.

§ 10. For the payment of all expenses to be incurred, under the authority of this act, including the damages awarded and expenses incurred upon the acquisition of land and of estates and interests therein, and the construction of said parks, and the erection and furnishing of buildings therein, the comptroller of the city of New York shall issue from time to time bonds or stock of the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, to be payable from taxation and redeemable in not less than ten nor more than thirty years from the date of issue, in such amounts as shall be necessary to carry out the purposes of this act, and the mayor and comptroller are hereby

authorized and directed to sign said bonds, and it shall be the duty of the clerk of the common council of said city to countersign the same and to affix thereto the seal of the said city. Said bonds shall bear interest at a rate to be fixed by the comptroller, not exceeding four per centum per annum, and shall not be disposed of at less than the par value thereof. But no contract shall be entered into or liability incurred for the construction of any of said parks, or for the erection of any building therein, until the plans for such construction or erection, and in the case of a building an estimate of the cost thereof, shall have been prepared by the department of public parks, and submitted to and approved by the board of estimate and apportionment of said city. But no more than the sum of one million of dollars shall be expended or authorized to be expended in any one year under the provisions of this act.

Chapter 526, Laws of the State of New York, Passed on May 2, 1893, at the 116th Session of the Legislature in the City of Albany; Albany: James B Lyon, Printer, 1893, 1123.

Chap. 526.

AN ACT to vacate assessments made or which may hereafter be made for making and laying out Mulberry Bend park in the city of New York.

APPROVED by the Governor May 2, 1893. Passed, three-fifths being present.

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The board of street opening and improvement, the comptroller, the collector of assessments and clerk of arrears of the city of New York, are and each of them is hereby directed to cancel and discharge such assessments as have been or may be hereafter made for the making and laying out of the park known as Mulberry Bend park in the city of New York and for the cost of property taken and used for said purpose.

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Chapter 69, Laws of the State of New York, Passed on March 4, 1895, at the 118th Session of the Legislature in the City of Albany; Albany: James B Lyon, Printer, 1895, 61-62.

Chap. 69.

AN ACT to amend chapter three hundred and twenty of the laws of eighteen hundred and eighty-seven, entitled "An act to provide for the location, acquisition, construction and improvement of additional public parks in the city of New York."

Accepted by the city.

BECAME a law March 4, 1895, with the approval of the Governor. Passed, three-fifths being present.

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Section ten of chapter three hundred and twenty of the laws of eighteen hundred and eighty-seven, entitled "An act to provide for the location, acquisition, construction and improvement of additional public parks in the city of New York," is hereby amended so as to read as follows: Act amended.

§ 10. For the payment of all expenses to be incurred, under the authority of this act, including the damages awarded and expenses incurred upon the acquisition of land and of estates and interests therein, and the construction of said parks, and the erection and furnishing of buildings therein, the comptroller of the city of New York shall issue, from time to time, bonds or stock of the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, to be payable from taxation and redeemable in not less than ten nor more than thirty years from the date of issue, in such amounts as shall be necessary to carry out the purposes of this act, and the mayor and comptroller are hereby authorized and directed to sign said bonds, and it shall be the duty of the clerk of the common council of said city to countersign the same and to affix thereto the seal of the said city. Said bonds shall bear interest at a rate to be fixed by the comptroller, not exceeding four percentum per annum, and shall not be disposed of at less than the par value thereof. But no contract shall be entered into or liability incurred for the construction of any of said parks, or for the erection of any building therein, until the plans for such construction or erection, and in the case of a building an estimate of the cost thereof, shall have been prepared by the department of public parks, and submitted to and approved by the board of estimate and apportionment of said city. But no more than the sum of one million of dollars shall be expended or authorized to be expended

Issue of stocks or bonds.

Incurring of liability restricted.

Limitation.

Issue of additional bonds or stocks.

in any one year under the provisions of this act; except that there may be issued in addition to said sum of one million of dollars in each year, such additional bonds or stocks as above mentioned, of the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, as may be necessary to pay the expenses of the construction, completion and acquisition of the land and of estates and interest therein, and of the construction of the parks hereinafter named and of the erection and furnishing of buildings therein, to wit: The park commonly called Mulberry Bend park, being a tract of land bounded by Mulberry, Park, Bayard and Baxter streets in the sixth ward of the city of New York; Saint John's park in the ninth ward in said city, and the park commonly called the East river extension park, being the land bounded on the west by Avenue B, on the north and east by the Harlem and East rivers, and on the south by East Eighty-sixth street, all in the city of New York.

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Chapter 295, Laws of the State of New York, Passed on April 17, 1896, at the 119th Session of the Legislature in the City of Albany; Albany: James B. Lyon, Printer, 1896, 337.

Chap. 295.

AN ACT to ratify the laying out of Saint John's Park in the city of New York for a small public park, and to provide for the payment of the expenses of acquiring title thereto and the construction and improvement thereof.

Passed without the acceptance of the city.

BECAME a law April 17, 1896, with the approval of the Governor. Passed, three-fifths being present.

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Action of board in laying out park legalized.

Section 1. The action of the board of street opening and improvement of the city of New York, laying out the lands known as Saint John's cemetery, bounded by Hudson, Clarkson and Leroy streets, in the ninth ward of the city of New York, for the purpose of a small public park, pursuant to chapter three hundred and twenty, of the laws of eighteen hundred and eighty-seven, entitled "An act to provide for the location, acquisition, construction and improvement of additional public parks in the city of New York," is hereby ratified and confirmed and the said lands declared to be a public park of the city of New York.

Payment of expense.

§ 2. The total expense incurred and to be incurred in acquiring title to said lands, and of the construction and improvement thereof as a public park, pursuant to said act, shall be borne by the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, and to be paid from the proceeds of bonds or stocks of the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, which the comptroller of the city of New York is hereby directed to issue under the general provisions of said act. Such issue of bonds and stocks shall be in addition to the amount limited by said act, to be expended or authorized to be expended in any one year.

Local assessments cancelled and annulled.

§ 3. No local assessment for such expense or any part thereof shall be made, and the local assessments heretofore made for defraying part of said expense, are hereby vacated, cancelled and annulled, and the comptroller, the collector of assessments and the clerk of arrears of the city of New York, are and each of them is hereby authorized, empowered and directed to forthwith cancel and discharge said assessments upon the records of their respective offices.

§ 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

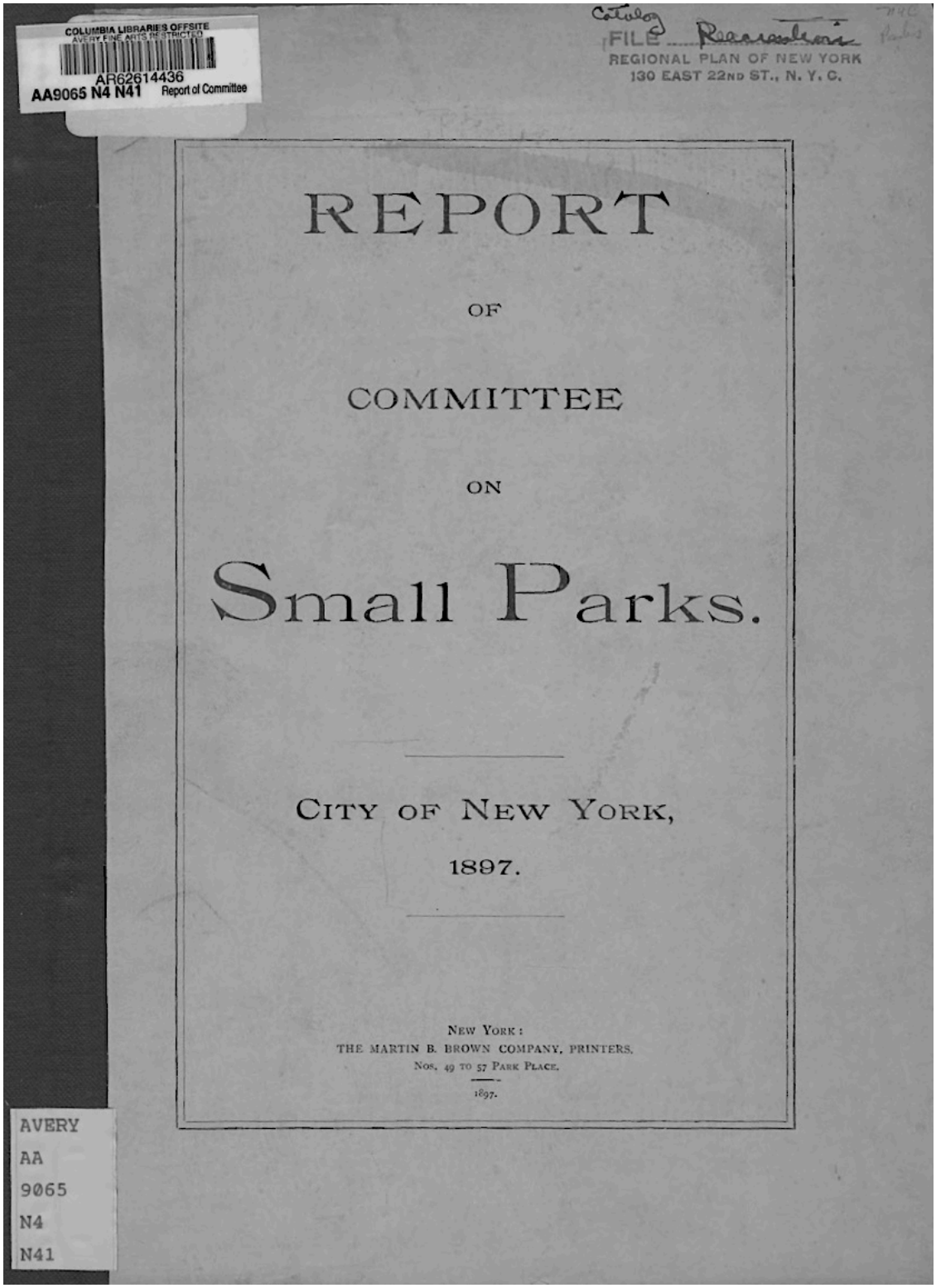
"Article 426: Chapter 378 of the Laws of 1897," *Charter of the City of New York, 1897,* Brooklyn: Brooklyn Daily Eagle, August 1899, 45.

Board of public improvements; general powers.

Sec. 426. The said board of public improvements shall exercise such powers and perform such duties with respect to the whole territory embraced within the city of New York, as constituted by this act, as were heretofore vested in the board of street opening and improvements of the corporation known as the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, with respect to the territory included within that municipality, except so far as the same have been otherwise specifically and expressly conferred by this act. And the said board of public improvements shall exercise such other powers and perform such other duties as are vested in or cast upon it by any of the provisions of this act, or that may in accordance with the law be devolved upon it by the municipal assembly.

Appendix B: Report of Committee on Small Parks, City of New York 1897

New York: Martin B. Brown Company, Printers, 1897.



REPORT

OF

COMMITTEE

ON

Small Parks.

CITY OF NEW YORK,

1897.

NEW YORK:
THE MARTIN B. BROWN COMPANY, PRINTERS,
NOS. 49 TO 57 PARK PLACE.
1897.

CITY HALL, NEW YORK,
October 28, 1897.

His Honor WILLIAM L. STRONG, *Mayor:*

The Advisory Committee, appointed by you in the month of June last to consider and advise as to the necessity of additional small parks and playgrounds, respectfully submits the following report and accompanying documents :

The Committee entered upon its duties with a profound sense of the importance of the subject matter submitted to them. This opinion has been confirmed by the careful investigation which they have made as to the requirements of the city, and by the actual facts which have been gathered from the reports of the Police and Health Departments. By the co-operation of the Park Department and of the Health Officers the Committee has been able to prepare a map showing the density of population and the death-rate in the respective wards, and to locate thereon the position of the existing public parks, large and small, and of the school-houses already erected and of those proposed to be built within the limits of the former City of New York. With this preliminary knowledge it has been easy to locate the places where parks and playgrounds were necessary for the growth and recreation of the people.

In the original plan of the City of New York the children seem to have been forgotten. Doubtless this oversight was due to the extensive area of unoccupied land which was available for the games and sports in which the youth of that day were wont to indulge. But as the city has grown in population, and especially within the last thirty years, this unoccupied space has been covered by improvements which has left to the children no other opportunity for play but such as can be found in the streets. The streets themselves have been largely occupied by car tracks and new servitudes, so that it is dangerous as well as obstructive to traffic for the children to use them for games of any kind, without incurring the interference of the police. A sense of hostility between the children and the guardians of public order is thus engendered, leading to the growth of a criminal class and to the educaiton of citizens who become enemies of law and order. Nothing can be worse or more to be deplored than this state of affairs, whether regarded

from a moral or economic point of view. The outlay for police, courts, reformatories, hospitals, alms houses and prisons is thus largely increased, while outside of these safeguards against poverty and crime is bred a general feeling of discontent, which is the cause of much misery, poverty and danger to society. Your Committee are convinced from the careful examination which they have been enabled to make, and especially by the marvelous improvement in the neighborhood of the new small parks, which have recently been brought into use, that the failure to provide for the reasonable recreation of the people, and especially for playgrounds for the rising generation, has been the most efficient cause of the growth of crime and pauperism in our midst.

Again since the city has secured the larger parks there has been a strange oversight of the necessity of providing, first of all, for the children the opportunity to use these public grounds freely for games and recreative sports. In fact it is only within the last year that the primary and superior right of the children to air and sunshine has been recognized by throwing open all the green spaces of the Central Park to their use and enjoyment. In the cities of the old world this superior claim of the children has always been recognized. The Gardens of the Tuileries, laid out by Le Nôtre, the great master of landscape gardening, are probably the most beautiful in the world. Amid all the wealth of shrubbery, flowers, statuary and fountains are spaces under the shade of trees devoted exclusively to games, both for adults and young children, while in the very walks may be found at all times of the day innumerable children digging holes and playing with the dirt heaps thus created. The guardians do not interfere with this apparent destruction of property, but at the close of the day they quietly fill up all of the holes, so that they may be ready for excavation on the following day. In other words, the practical conclusion has been reached, and has been acted upon, that every public park should be first of all a playground for the children, and to this necessity all other considerations are made to yield.

In this connection it is well to state that under the Park Act of 1887, which permitted the appropriation of one million of dollars per annum for the creation of small parks, it was assumed that playgrounds would be an essential part of every open space thus appropriated to the public use. It seems, however, that the authorities of the Park Departments entertain doubts as to whether the language of the Act is sufficiently clear to allow

them to establish playgrounds in any part of these parks. The Chairman of this Committee, under whose personal supervision and direction the Act was drawn, is able to declare that the playground was assumed to be an essential part of the Park, but to avoid all doubt which may now exist upon this point, it is recommended that the act should be so amended as to require playgrounds to be made part of the park in each case ; otherwise the main object in view of the establishment of these parks will be defeated.

Your Committee do not deem it necessary to enlarge upon the considerations which led to the legislation above referred to, because the experience gained in the last ten years has shown conclusively to the public authorities, as well as to the citizens of New York, the absolute necessity as well as the healthful influence upon morals and conduct of these outlets for the physical energies of youth, which, if not directed to good ends, will surely manifest themselves in evil tendencies.

The Committee therefore submit with this report the detailed report of the Sub-Committee, who have been diligently engaged in procuring the information necessary to determine the number and locality of the small parks and playgrounds, which are immediately required for the public use. With the conclusions of the Sub-Committee, your Committee are substantially in accord, and unanimously submit the following recommendations :

1. *That half a block be taken for a public playground in Rivington street, between Goerck and Mangin streets, adjoining the public bath. To this the Board of Street Opening and Improvement has already given its assent.*

2. *That the block between Houston and Stanton streets, Essex and Norfolk streets, in which stand Grammar School No. 13 and the Pro-Cathedral Mission, be taken for a public park and playground, leaving the school and mission where they are.*

3. *That a public playground be established on Cherry Hill, on the site of Gotham Court, now demolished.*

4. *That a shore park be laid out between East Forty-ninth and East Fifty-second streets, on the strip of land on the water's edge, now used for the storage of old iron.*

5. *That a small park be laid out on the two blocks of high land, at present mostly vacant, west of Eleventh avenue, between Fifty-second and Fifty-fourth streets.*

6. *That half of the block bounded by Mulberry and Mott streets, Spring and Broome streets, be taken for a public playground for the Fourteenth Ward.*

7. That a part of a block on the line of Ninth avenue, the site suggested being the eastern end of the block between Fifteenth and Sixteenth streets, be taken for a public playground for the children of the Sixteenth Ward.

8. That a section about 250 by 200 feet at the west end of the block between Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth streets, First and Second avenues, be taken for a public playground.

9. That the propriety and feasibility of securing the new New York Marble Cemetery in the block between Second and Third streets, Second avenue and the Bowery, be taken into careful consideration, with a view to its acquirement without cost to the city.

10. That the utility of uniting a playground and push-cart market, as recommended by Colonel Waring, in a block on the line of Hester street, in the Tenth Ward, be carefully considered, and if approved, that the necessary legislation be secured at the earliest possible date.

11. That a public playground at least two hundred feet square be established at or near Grammar School No. 82, First avenue and Seventieth street.

12. That a public playground at least two hundred feet square be established at or near the Public School No. 515, West Thirty-seventh street.

13. That a public playground be established on the line of the Ninth avenue, near Fortieth street; if it be deemed desirable, a push-cart market may be combined.

14. That the playgrounds of the new schools hereafter built, whether on the roof or on the ground, be thrown open to the public out of school hours and be made the general places of recreation for the neighborhood.

In addition to these specific recommendations your Committee are of opinion that the proposed public playground at the foot of East Seventy-sixth street should be established without delay; that playgrounds should be made part of every park which now has none, and that the policy inaugurated at the Central Park of giving larger privileges to the children for play shall be permanently continued.

It is also recommended that the site on Randall's Island, now used by the House of Refuge under a perpetual lease by the city, shall be secured for a public park, to be established as soon as the proper arrangement can be made and legislation obtained.

The policy of appropriating all unused plots of city ground for children's playgrounds, either temporary or permanent, should be definitely

established, and with this view that the Small Park Act of 1887 should be amended as above recommended so as to make the provision of playgrounds obligatory.

It will, of course, be advisable to consult with the Board of Education before adopting the suggestions as to playgrounds adjacent to public schools, but wherever it is possible to make such a combination it seems to your Committee to be most desirable.

As appears by the report of the Sub-Committee hereto annexed, the expenditure required for the establishment of the parks and playgrounds above recommended, will not exceed three millions, five hundred and eighty thousand dollars. Inasmuch as the amount of one million of dollars per annum, authorized to be expended under the Small Park Act of 1887, was for several years not appropriated, and although not cumulative, is nevertheless an amount which ought heretofore to have been expended, it is recommended that an amendment of the act be secured, authorizing the city authorities to use during the coming year the sum not so expended in carrying out the recommendations of this report. In the judgment of your Committee there is no justification for delay in providing the air spaces required in the densely populated portions of the city where relief is immediately required by every consideration of public policy and morality.

When these recommendations have been carried into effect, there will still remain much to be done, by the continuation of the successful and admirable policy of the Dock Department in providing recreation piers, and of the Board of Education in opening, out of school hours, the playgrounds which under the law must henceforth be established in connection with each school. Above One Hundred and Fifty-fifth street the law now authorizes the Board of Street Openings to lay out parks and playgrounds, and your Committee earnestly recommends that this be done in every part of the outlying suburbs before the growth of population shall raise the value of the land required and in anticipation of the requirements for recreation, so that the children of the coming generation shall not be subjected to the evil influence of an education acquired in the streets of the city, so unfavorable as it has proved to be to their physical and moral development.

Your Committee desires in conclusion to express its hearty acknowledgments to the Officers of the Park and the Health Departments, without whose co-operation it would not have been possible to make, within reasonable limits of time, specific recommendations ; to the Commissioners of the

Dock Department for the recognition of the value and necessity of recreation piers upon the water front of the city ; and to the Board of Education for the ample provision of school playgrounds which with their approval can be made available for the public at a time after school hours when they are most needed.

The hope of your Committee is that by the hearty co-operation of the public authorities in all departments of the city government the reproach, which for so many years has rested upon the fair fame of the city, and the danger which menaces public order by depriving the children of a proper outlet for their physical energies, and for the development of their moral faculties, will be removed as soon as possible, and never again be allowed to reach its present discreditable and dangerous proportions.

Your Committee begs leave to express to you personally their thanks for the interest which you have shown in promoting this great reform, which promises the most beneficent results and is absolutely necessary in order that all the people of the city shall share in the benefits of its growth and prosperity.

For the purpose of assisting the public authorities in carrying into effect the recommendations hereinbefore contained, it is respectfully suggested that the Committee be continued until otherwise ordered.

(Signed) Abram S. Hewitt, *Chairman.*
De Witt J. Seligman.
John B. Devins.
Myer S. Isaacs.
James J. Higginson.
William R. Stewart.
Joseph D. Bryant.
Charles G. Wilson, *ex-officio.*
Samuel McMillan, *ex-officio.*

Jacob A. Riis,
Secretary.

NEW YORK, October 18, 1897.

HON. ABRAM S. HEWITT,

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Small Parks:

SIR—The Committee on Sites herewith submits its report. Accompanying it is a map showing location of all existing parks and public breathing spaces, and of such as have been laid out and acquired, or are now being acquired, under the Small Parks Law and special enactments; also recreation piers built and projected by the Dock Board; and further, showing the neighborhood where varying degrees of turbulence among the young are attributed by the police to their lack of opportunity for healthful play, the street with all its resultant evils being their only resort. Finally, the location of the half-hundred new schools planned by the Board of Education, some of them now in course of erection, is recorded on the map. The coincidence that these schools are most numerous where the police find it hardest to manage the young contains a suggestion which to your Committee seems most pregnant. Indeed, the Committee are convinced that those schools with their coming playgrounds hold the key to the more urgent part of the question that is submitted to your Board for advice.

Two points of view presented themselves to the Committee at the outset: That of the physical and that of the moral health of the people. As to the former, the mortality reports, adult and infant, and the statistics of population were considered. The neighborhoods with the densest crowds and the highest death-rate were ascertained. If the Fourteenth Ward, for instance, showed a death-rate that came perilously near doubling the average mortality of the city, evidently here was a danger to be met, and abundant experience has shown that a most effective way of meeting it is to make breathing spaces among crowded tenements. From the point of view of the moral health of the population, the police reports became of the first importance to your Committee; next the trend of the population and its density as regards the children especially. It happens that a low death-rate is not infrequently associated with the greatest crowds and the greatest danger to the young. It sometimes became clear from an examination of the statistics of the population, also, that certain neighborhoods, as yet not over crowded, are tending fast toward the bad traditions of the past, and in such it is the part of wisdom to head off the mischief while there is yet time. Here, again,

the remedy is the same. Room for all to breathe and for the young to play is the best guarantee for the day to come, as it is the cure for much of the evil of the present.

The study of these conditions brought constantly to mind the terse English saying, which expresses the concrete experience of forty years of battling with the slum abroad, that "crime in our large cities is to the greatest extent simply a question of athletics." With a common accord the precinct captains attribute the existence of juvenile rowdyism and turbulence to the lack of a better playground than the street. "The juvenile population," reports the captain of the Thirteenth Precinct, "has of late been growing worse. The reasons are plain—the continually increasing population and want of proper playgrounds. The children use the middle of the street as their playground. A great many accidents are caused by their doing so." The captain of the Eighteenth Precinct says: "Children play in the street and break lamps and windows because they have no other provision made for them;" and so wherever the police have trouble with the young. "There are so many boys in the precinct and no place for them to play," says the captain of the Twenty-seventh Precinct, the station-house of which is in East Eighty-eighth street. "On this account there are more complaints, and arrests are more frequent than before. There used to be many vacant lots where they could play without interference, but now they are built upon and, as more houses come, more people come with them and there are more boys. Many complaints are received daily relative to boys annoying pedestrians, storekeepers and tenants by their continually playing baseball in some part of most every street. The damage is not slight and arrests are frequent."

Where small parks have been already made the verdict is equally unanimous that they have changed the character of the neighborhood for the better. The captain of the Twelfth Precinct reports: "The Hook Gang is gone. It has disappeared since the establishment of the Corlears Hook Park." The Sixth Precinct has this to say of the Mulberry Bend: "The establishment of Mulberry Bend Park is one of the greatest blessings that could be bestowed on the people of this precinct, as it eradicated one of the worst blocks in the city, which was the home of a horde of the most depraved and debased classes, male and female, of all nationalities. Since the eradication of this block, the whole neighborhood has taken a change and decidedly for the better;" and so on through the whole register.

These reports made it evident that it was not a question of moving an unruly population, but of changing its environment. The troublesome boys had not moved away. They had found something better to do than smashing lamps and windows and getting themselves arrested. They had a place now to romp in. That was all they wanted. Their gangs and their raids on

inoffensive neighbors were a protest against the conditions that denied them the chance. In healthy play youthful energies find a safe outlet. Block the outlet and another will be found, but then the play is apt not to be healthy. That, in brief, is the lesson by which other communities have long since profited. In English and Scotch cities the playground has taken its place as a legitimate and important factor in the education of the young to responsible citizenship. Boston, Philadelphia and other American cities have followed their example. New York has as yet not a single municipal playground, and not yet a school playground worthy of the name. However, a law of recent enactment forbids the erection of any new school-house without an out-door playground for the children's use.

In the minds of your Committee this view of the matter took first rank. Following the precedent set by your body when at one of its first sessions you asked the Park Department to provide a playground in every park that had none, the Committee cast about for means of providing children with wholesome amusement where their crowds were densest and the danger of the street greatest. The Rivington street block, where a public playground is to be opened pursuant to your request, is such a spot. Two obstacles presented themselves. One is in the law, which makes no mention of playgrounds as such. It provides for small parks only. Playgrounds are mentioned in connection with the two East Side parks now being laid out under the law of 1895, but they were an afterthought. There is nothing about them in the law of 1887, under which your Committee exists, and the million dollars a year which it appropriates for small parks may not legally be used to lay out playgrounds. However, the present state of the public mind on the subject warrants the assumption that the law could be readily amended to include playgrounds. This should in any event be done. No good can come of an attempt to stretch the meaning of the law by mixing parks and playgrounds, or by passing one off for the other. They are essentially different and serve a different purpose, even if to the same end. The children must be allowed to possess their playgrounds in peace, free from interference of their elders. It must be their very own, under proper supervision, of course, to be of the best use. This obstacle is easily enough surmounted. The other, the great cost of providing sufficient playgrounds for the hundreds of thousands who now have none, is more serious. It would be prohibitive but for the way out suggested by the schools.

The law of April 17, 1895, reads as follows: "Hereafter no school-house shall be constructed in the City of New York without an open air playground attached to, or used in connection with the same." At the approach of the last summer vacation fifty-six new public schools were planned; the number has been increased, and is constantly being added to. This means, then, that fifty-six school playgrounds are coming within two or three years,

and coming, as the map shows, where they are most needed. Their size has not been fixed. There is nothing in the law to determine it. In England a minimum of thirty square feet for each child has been settled upon, but our schools are often so large that such a standard would lay the Board of Education open to the charge of apparent extravagance. In fact, the great cost of land in some localities would of itself put it out of the question, unless the playgrounds were arranged on the roof, as in some of the downtown schools that are now being built. It seems as if the proposition that these school playgrounds (whether on the ground or on the roof), be made the general neighborhood recreation grounds after school hours, might be made the means at once of overcoming the difficulty of the Board of Education by justifying the purchase of sites of sufficient size, and of meeting the need which your Committee has been appointed to advise upon.

The longer one looks at this proposition the more sensible it seems. The schools of London long since, in large measure, opened their playgrounds to the public in the summer vacation under the same pressure that now weighs upon New York. There seems to be no good reason why school playgrounds should stand unused all the long afternoons and evenings, every Saturday and Sunday, and for two whole months during the hot season, when they are most needed; or why the city should be put to the expense of laying out another set of playgrounds with these available. There is even something to be gained that is not by any means mere sentiment, in the binding of the child to his school by identifying it with his play; something to be gained that will shortly appear in the lessened expense of caring for truants. When the boys find that their play and their schools go together, they will not want to play hookey nearly so much as they did. From securing the playground for the pupils out of school hours, there is only a step, and not a very long one, to making it the general neighborhood playground. Every roof playground may with slight expense in the planning be made into a roof garden. The question of supervision need cause no trouble. It may be safely predicted that the police will be glad to attend to that as their share of it. In the past they have sometimes been compelled to establish roof patrols in defense against the roughs whom the street trained to rebellion against law and order. This kind of roof duty would be a relief sure to be gladly welcomed.

Believing that the co-operation of the Board of Education will furnish a practical solution of the playground question, the Secretary addressed, on July 14, to the President of the Board the letter of which a copy is annexed. It was read at the meeting of the Board on that date and ordered printed in full in the minutes, and the matter was referred to the Committee on Instruction. No answer has yet been received, but assurance has been given by individual members of the Board of Education that they favor the plan and

the Committee feels certain that objections that may arise can be satisfactorily disposed of. Convinced that school and playground should go together, it has been at pains, where older schools exist in crowded localities (without open spaces) to pick out sites near or adjoining these for such public playgrounds as seem to be needed, hoping thus to make a start toward providing also the existing schools with this most efficient adjunct to child-training. The Committee presents below a summary of its inquiries by wards, with the reasons that have led to its conclusions in each case. The First, Second and Third Wards are omitted for obvious reasons. They are all comprised within the downtown business districts where there is no need of more park space than already exists or where, at all events, it is unattainable. The statistics of population are from the police census of 1895, unless otherwise stated. The mortality statistics are those of the Health Department:

FOURTH WARD.

Acreage	83.3	
Population	18,405	(falling off.)
Density of population per acre	220.9	
Number of children under 15 years	5,233	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	63	
Death-rate in 1896	36.31	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	123.5	

Of all the wards that are considered in this report, the Fourth has the highest death-rate and, next to the Fourteenth, the highest infant death-rate. It would otherwise not be in this list, as its population will never increase, but will probably decrease steadily before advancing business. Attention is called by the police to the fact that its five thousand and odd children have no place in which to play. There is no park or open space within the limits of the ward. The captain of the Oak Street Squad reports: "There is not now a pier on the river front that is open to the public. Formerly there were three or four. I would suggest that at least one of them be constructed with a second story and opened to the public."

It would probably be cheaper to lay out a playground ashore. The very busy character of the dock front in that locality, together with the crowded condition of South street, by which access must be had to such a recreation pier, would seem to make this advisable. The Board of Health has recently seized and caused to be destroyed the old Gotham Court tenements on Cherry Hill. This property abuts on a condemned school-house in Roosevelt street. The site of Gotham Court could no doubt be bought cheaply, and if the school-house were then torn down and the lots upon

which it stands added, a playground something over one hundred feet wide on Cherry street, extending back two hundred feet with an L on Roosevelt street, would be obtained at a much less cost than by building a play-pier. Better still, the school-house might be allowed to stand without essential detriment to the playground. If the Committee is rightly informed, it has been condemned because the light in the classrooms was bad. This fault has been corrected by the removal of the old tenements. The Board of Education will gain a school-house by this arrangement and the ward a playground.

Whichever course be pursued, this playground, together with that now being provided on the roof of the Catharine street school-house, should make needed provision for the children of the Fourth Ward.

Fifth Ward.

Acreage	160.2	
Population	10,603	(falling off.)
Density of population per acre	66.2	
Number of children under 15 years	2,832	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	18.	
Death-rate in 1896	28.70	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	95.4	

The Fifth Ward has two triangular parks, at the foot of Canal street and in Duane street, inconsiderable in extent, but sufficient for their purpose in that locality. The Canal street triangle appears to be in need of better supervision, as the police captain reports that "many worthless bums who go there crowd out the decent people," while the Duane street triangle, where there is a watchman, has no such grievance. As the map shows, one of the new school houses planned by the Board of Education to take the place of an older one is to be erected almost in the middle of the ward. Its playground, whether on the roof or on the ground (if made of proper size), should provide sufficiently for the children of the ward.

Sixth Ward.

Acreage	101.1	
Population	22,897	(stationary or nearly so.)
Density of population per acre	226.5	
Number of children under 15 years	6,756	
Density of child population under 15 years, per acre	57	
Death-rate in 1896	26.87	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	82.	

The City Hall Park, of more than eight acres, and the Mulberry Bend Park, which, with the adjoining Paradise Park Square, has about three acres, are within the limits of the Sixth Ward. Since the completion of the Mulberry Bend Park it has all the air space it needs. The police testimony is emphatic that the Mulberry Bend Park has changed the whole neighborhood for the better. It is desirable to have a playground at the park for the exclusive use of the children, especially since the large school in Bayard street that overlooks it has none.

Your Committee having already by formal resolution requested the authorities to provide playground spaces in every park, the Committee on Sites desires simply to emphasize this need.

Seventh Ward.

Acreage	206	
Population	74,227	(increasing).
Density of population per acre	360.7	
Number of Children under 15 years	25,774	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	125	
Death-rate in 1896	20.39	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	63.	

The fact that the death-rate of the Seventh Ward (in spite of its crowding) falls below the general average for the city, is attributable to its hardy and temperate, although needy Jewish population. The same experience is met with in the Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth Wards, where the crowding and want are great and the population predominantly Jewish. This is one of the instances in which the death-rate fails as a guide for our purpose and the point of view of the children comes uppermost.

There has been only too much evidence that the conditions in these crowded wards were a source of corruption to the young. Practically two precincts are embraced within the Seventh Ward. The contrast in the reports of their respective commanders is extremely suggestive. The captain of the Seventh Precinct, which embraces the west end of the ward, complains of a tendency to juvenile turbulence in the district between Catharine and Pike streets, and says that "more letters complaining of mischievous boys are received than before." He gives as the reasons for this the tenement crowds and the lack of playgrounds which sends the children to the street. On the other hand, the captain of the Twelfth Precinct, at the east end of the ward, states that his precinct is getting better and that the Hook Gang is gone. "It has disappeared since the establishment of the Corlears Hook Park."

A glance at the map will show that one of the new small parks now being laid out, viz., the Division Street Park, is located at the northern line of the ward and partly within it. In the middle of the turbulent district at the west end of the ward one of the new schools with a playground is to be built, and just over the line of the Fourth Ward is the Catharine street school previously spoken of. Another new school is to be erected in the most crowded section of the east end of the ward. These playgrounds, together with Corlears Hook Park of over eight acres, the half-acre park at Rutgers Slip, and the new Division Street Park of nearly two acres, should be sufficient for the Seventh Ward. The Committee wishes only to point out the desirability of having a playground (in connection with Corlears Hook Park) for the use of the children especially.

Eighth Ward.

Acreage	177.1	
Population	31,374	(stationary).
Density of population per acre	177.2	
Number of children under 15 years	8,853	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	50	
Death-rate in 1896	27.70	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	90.	

While there is no park within the limits of the Eighth Ward, the proposed St. John's Park is just over the line of the Ninth Ward. This park will be nearly two acres in extent. There ought to be a playground for the children and the opportunity is furnished by the coming erection of a new school-house near the centre of the ward (see map.) Now is the time to obtain a site large enough to serve as a real neighborhood playground. If that is done there will be no need of locating any other open space here.

Ninth Ward.

Acreage	305	
Population	60,987	(stationary).
Density of population per acre	200	
Number of children under 15 years	14,622	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	48	
Death-rate in 1896	26.26	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	94.	

There seems to be no need of making any special provision for the Ninth Ward. The St. John's Cemetery Park, on the south side of the ward, and the new recreation pier, at Christopher street, will furnish the needed relief in that quarter. At the other end of the ward the boys have in the open Gansevoort market on the river shore a natural playground which is open to them in the hours of the afternoon when it is especially needed. With proper regulations as to sweeping and the admission of wagons and perhaps with a better pavement, this market is capable of being made very available for the purpose, on the line of suggestion made by Colonel Waring in the matter of his proposed "push-cart market." As a matter of fact, it is now used by the boys of the neighborhood, who contest their baseball matches here. Their play is carried on more or less by stealth, however. If it were understood that the market was theirs to use within certain hours which would not interfere with its original purpose, and arrangements were made accordingly, a point would be gained which would tell for good citizenship in the Ninth Ward in the generation to come.

Tenth Ward.

Acreage	109	
Population	70,168	(increasing rapidly.)
Density of population per acre	643.8	
Number of children under 15 years	24,923	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	229	
Death-rate in 1896	17.94	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	57.3	

The Tenth Ward has not only the most crowded tenement-house population in the city, but there is nothing quite like it anywhere. It is notoriously the worst specimen of city crowding in the world. That at the same time it has a death-rate far below the normal, is reassuring from the point of view of the physical health of its people. The reasons have heretofore been dwelt upon. The other point of view, that of the moral well-being of the children, remains. It is apparent that in such crowds they must need above all else elbow-room, an outlet for their animal spirits, unduly restrained by the tenement. Efforts have been made to that end for years by organized philanthropy. The University Settlement and and the College Settlement have pitched their tents in the Tenth Ward. Here the beginning has been made of establishing boys' clubs in the schools. But in the whole ward there is not a green spot or a place where the boy can romp undisturbed. For this reason, the Division Street Park, with its playground, was laid out in one

corner of the ward. Colonel Waring's beneficent plan of a "push-cart market," a whole asphalted block that shall be for business in the morning, for the children in the afternoon, looks to the seizure of a site in the neighborhood of Hester and Ludlow streets, and would be of inestimable advantage. Two new schools are going up in this ward and one right over the line in the Thirteenth. With the three school playgrounds open to the children, a small park, and the push-cart market with a playground combination, which seems certain of attainment because of the great need of it for business purposes, a fair beginning will have been made of giving relief to the Tenth Ward. The Committee earnestly advises that the necessity of carrying out Colonel Waring's scheme be urged upon the city authorities, and renews with a special emphasis the recommendation that the school playgrounds be made the recreation grounds of the neighboring public.

ELEVENTH WARD.

Acreage	213	
Population	86,722	(increasing.)
Density of population per acre	407.1	
Number of children under 15 years	31,935	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years.	149	
Death-rate in 1896	19.29	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	55.4	

THIRTEENTH WARD.

Acreage	109	
Population	55,802	(increasing.)
Density of population per acre	539.5	
Number of children under 15 years	22,830	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years.	209	
Death-rate in 1896	17.79	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	61.	

The Eleventh and Thirteenth Wards may with advantage be considered together, leaving out for the present the Twelfth Ward, which is in Harlem. The two wards cover the territory, roughly speaking, from Grand street to Fourteenth street on the north, between the East river and Avenue B. Upon the western border of the district is Tompkins Square, on its southeastern Corlears Hook Park, at the southwestern corner Division Street Park, and fairly in the middle, the new Willett Park, which will cover an area of more than three and a half acres—two full blocks. There is a recrea-

tion pier in operation at the foot of Third street, which is a great success. In addition, three new school-houses are planned for the Eleventh Ward and one for the Thirteenth. They will all be on the line of the districts marked by the police as troublesome.

The population of both wards is of the same character and tendencies as that of the Tenth. The police report increasing trouble with the young, and for the same reason as in the other crowded neighborhoods, viz.: the lack of playgrounds other than the street. Many run-over accidents occur in consequence in the narrow and crowded streets. Upon this showing, the Committee, considering the case urgent, went before the Board of Street Opening and Improvement and asked that half a block in Rivington street, between Mangin and Goerck streets, be taken for a playground. The Board assented and instructed the Corporation Counsel to prepare a resolution under which such action could be legally taken. Thus, this recommendation of the Committee has been already acted upon.

FOURTEENTH WARD.

Acreage	108	
Population	31,904	(stationary).
Density of population per acre	295.4	
Number of children under 15 years	10,182	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	94	
Death-rate in 1896	34.30	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	130.4	

Next to the Fourth Ward the Fourteenth has the highest death-rate in this list. It is full of the old style bad tenements, inhabited largely by a low-class population, increasingly Italian, which crowds the old barracks with baneful results. While the crowding upon the land is not half as great as in the Tenth Ward, for instance, the average number of persons to a house is nearly the same, being 46.3 in the Tenth Ward and 40.2 in the Fourteenth. Only one other ward exceeds the Fourteenth in this respect, viz., the Thirteenth, with 42.6 persons to each house.

Taking in this instance the sanitary point of view, the Committee is strongly of the opinion that an open space ought to be provided here without delay. There is no park space within the ward. The nearest is the Mulberry Bend, a long way below. The availability of the Centre Market site was considered. This is city property, but it was represented to us that the site would be needed before long for a municipal building. The Committee decided to recommend the taking of half a block between Mulberry and Mott

streets and Spring and Broome streets, as both central and containing no valuable building, but some it will be well to get rid of.

The Committee recommends that this half block be turned into a neighborhood playground. It has the advantage of being opposite the Mulberry Street Police Station, and therefore under ready police surveillance.

Fifteenth Ward.

Acreage	225	
Population	26,216	(stationary).
Density of population per acre	116.5	
Number of children under 15 years	4,372	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	19	
Death-rate in 1896	21.67	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	99.1	

The Fifteenth Ward, which has Washington Square as its core, need not be considered here. It has no need of either park or playground. The population is not exclusively a tenement-house population, and the captain of the precinct in answer to the inquiry: "What are the local causes of juvenile rowdyism in the district?" which was sent to all the commanding officers, reports that "there are no local causes in this precinct."

Sixteenth Ward.

Acreage	318	
Population	57,430	(slowly increasing).
Density of population per acre	180.6	
Number of children under 15 years	11,751	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	37	
Death-rate in 1896	22.55	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	80.3	

The Sixteenth Ward has not within it any park space, though it embraces half the width of the island between Fourteenth and Twenty-sixth streets, from Sixth avenue west, in strong contrast to the Eighteenth Ward on the east which, with nearly the same area within the same street limits, has in Union Square, Madison Square and Stuyvesant Square parks, not counting Gramercy Park, which is private property, nearly fourteen acres for the public use. There is to be a small park at Twenty-eighth street and Ninth avenue, in the Twentieth Ward, which will no doubt become the re-

sort of many persons from the Sixteenth, but it is not enough. Both these wards have been notorious in past years on account of the disorder that thrived in the tenement districts west of Tenth avenue. "Hell's Kitchen," in West Thirty-ninth street, and Poverty Gap, in West Twenty-eighth street, are of traditional notoriety in this respect. Their gangs have in a measure been suppressed and the police now deny their existence. However, occasional outbursts of a murderous character proclaim the need of other civilizing influences. The captain of the Twentieth Precinct reports that there are "not enough playgrounds or parks to give the children natural recreation. In consequence, street ball playing becomes a nuisance, causing many complaints and arrests." Private charity, recognizing the emergency, has in the past established playgrounds in this district and proved the police assertion entirely true. Disorder ceased and murderous gangs disappeared wherever these playgrounds were opened. It is only necessary to bring to mind the case of Poverty Gap, where the "Alley Gang" had murdered the one good boy in the block for the crime of working every day to support his aged father and mother. Policemen patrolled the neighborhood at night in danger of their lives. When the old tenements were torn down and on their site a playground was opened, the neighborhood changed as if by magic. Disorder ceased, and the name and fame of Poverty Gap became but a bad memory.

The Committee recommend that a permanent playground of half a block or thereabouts be established on the line of Ninth avenue, and suggest the east end of the block between Fifteenth and Sixteenth streets as eligible for this purpose.

SEVENTEENTH WARD.

Acreage	266	
Population	114,727	(increasing.)
Density of population per acre	431.4	
Number of children under 15 years	31,774	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	119	
Death-rate in 1896	20.85	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	70.9	

This is largely a German ward with a much better class of tenants than the Fourteenth Ward, for instance, hence the low death-rate, in spite of its crowds. The point of view of the children is here again to be taken. On the east side of the ward is Tompkins Square, embracing ten and a half acres. It has been of inestimable benefit to the neighborhood and has changed its character entirely. The captain of the precinct to-day reports of the residents about the park that they are "a quiet and orderly people." Those

of us who remember the day when Tompkins Square, as yet merely a sand lot where every passing wind raised clouds of choking dust and where half the turbulent elements of the East side had their meeting place, was the dreaded storm centre of the "Bread and Blood" riots, appreciate the change wrought by the beneficent agency of the park.

Tompkins Square is enough for the north end of the ward, but an open space for the children's use especially is badly needed upon its west and south sides. Two sites seem especially available for this purpose. There is in Houston street, at the corner of Essex, a large school (Grammar School No. 13) which, when the addition now being built is completed, will contain nearly 3,000 pupils by day and 1,000 by night. In the same block, on Stanton street, is the Pro-Cathedral with its schools and kindergartens that reach probably as many as 1,000 children, which are drawn largely, as are those of the public school, from among the neediest residents of the adjoining Tenth Ward. The school has no playground. The Board of School Inspectors of the Fifth District have asked the Board of Education to acquire adjoining property for one as a prime necessity of the school, coupling their request with the suggestion that the Board "use its influence with the authorities to have such playground made public for the benefit of the children of the neighborhood." The Committee would recommend that all of the block except the school and the Pro-Cathedral be taken for a public playground or a small park under the Act of 1887. The property consists largely of tenements which can well be dispensed with. There are no valuable buildings. The site is exactly in the right spot for a playground for all that neighborhood.

The New York Marble Cemetery plot in the block between the Bowery and Second avenue and Second and Third streets offers an opportunity for the acquisition of a needed playground for that location. The cemetery is now but little used and perhaps could be obtained of its owners at small expense, and transformed into a playground. Burial there has always been in vault and the dead could be easily removed. The cemetery is a great garden surrounded by a high stone wall, and would seem to be well fitted for the establishment of a playground with gymnastic apparatus.

The only school playground which New York has had heretofore, is an old cemetery on the other side of Second avenue, near by, which was acquired under similar circumstances a few years ago, after it had ceased to be of use as a burial ground.

Eighteenth Ward.

Acreage	500	
Population	67,469	(stationary.)
Density of population per acre	134.9	

Number of children under 15 years	14,716
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	29
Death-rate in 1896	22.09
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52
Death-rate of children under 5 years	95.5

The Eighteenth Ward has in Union, Madison and Stuyvesant Squares a total of more than thirteen acres of park space. For needed playground space provision is made in the new recreation pier at the foot of East Twenty-fourth street, and in addition one of the new schools with a playground is coming (see map).

NINETEENTH WARD.

Acreage	1,851	
Population	267,076	(increasing rapidly).
Density of population per acre	144.3	
Number of children under 15 years	72,236	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	39	
Death-rate in 1896	17.77	
General death-rate in city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	85.9	

The Nineteenth Ward has the lowest death-rate in the city. Its tenements were built chiefly since the era of sanitary reform set in, and a better class of tenants live in them than in the old barracks downtown. Great numbers of children dwell in the districts along the river. The police report trouble all along the line as the natural result of their having no other place to play in than the street. In the neighborhood from Fifty-ninth street to Sixty-fifth street, east of Avenue A, and again from Seventieth street to Seventy-ninth street, where the tenements are thick and children swarm in great numbers, there is constant trouble, and arrests are frequent for ball playing and breaking windows. The irritation of shopkeepers is great, and of parents and children corresponding. Periodically, trouble with gangs break out in this district. The police point out that there used to be a chance for the children in the many vacant lots, but that as these have gone the crowds have kept on increasing, thus adding to the demand for playground space in proportion as the supply was curtailed.

Two parks border on the Nineteenth Ward; Central Park and the East River Park, but in Central Park, the police say, the children must have a permit to play games, and as yet there is no playground provided at the East River Park. President McMillan, a member of your Committee, has promised that a playground shall be laid out in the East River Park. The

Board of Street Opening and Improvement has assented to the establishment of a public playground at the foot of East Seventy-sixth street. The Committee would urge the early redemption of these promises and that better provision be made in Central Park for the children's play than now exists. Reference to the map will show that three new schools are to be built in the northern half of the ward.

The Committee recommends that a small shore park be laid out on the strip of land on the river shore under the bluff from Forty-ninth to Fifty-second street, which is now the resort of the mothers and babies of the neighborhood in warm weather. The strip of land is perhaps seventy-five feet wide, but filling-in to the bulkhead line will nearly double its width. It is at present used for storage of old junk and is of little service to any one. It is, however, capable of being made into a charming little park at small expense. There is a public swimming bath at this point which attracts boys in large numbers.

Many strong arguments have been advanced in favor of taking the old Jones' Wood property on the river shore, between Sixty-fourth and Seventieth streets, for a park space. The Committee has considered the arguments carefully, and while fully agreeing that it is desirable to preserve what remains of the woods at that spot for a shore park, still thinks that the small parks appropriation can be expended to better purpose in locating playgrounds for the children at suitable places in the district. It would suggest the placing of one at or near Grammar School No. 82, at First avenue and Seventieth street.

The Committee has only to add that it would seem possible to apply the green plots over the Forty-second street tunnel to better advantage than at present, by opening them and putting seats in them for the public.

Twenty-first Ward.

Acreage	380	
Population	72,144	(stationary).
Density of population per acre	189.9	
Number of children under 15 years	14,535	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	38	
Death-rate in 1896	21.59	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	99.8	

The Twenty-first Ward is taken out of its order because it adjoins the Nineteenth, while the Twentieth and Twenty-second lie together on the west side. It has no park space except for the little green spaces over the Park avenue tunnel which are pretty in the landscape but not for use. The ward has in its tenements near the river a rough and at times turbulent population.

A few years ago its gangs were among the worst in the city. None of the new schools laid down on the map come within the ward. The Committee recommends the opening of a public playground and suggests as the site the west end of the block between Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth streets, First and Second avenues. By the removal of a group of old and rather worthless tenements an open space of something over an acre in extent could be obtained at a justifiable cost. Opposite this block is the great parochial school of St. Gabriel, where half the Roman Catholic children of the ward go. Round the corner, in Thirty-seventh street, is a large public school, and three blocks away, in Thirty-second street, is another. This suggestion is subject to review after conference with the school authorities, like all similar suggestions made here.

TWENTIETH WARD.

Acreage	418.7	
Population	94,969	(stationary.)
Density of population per acre	226.8	
Number of children under 15 years	24,688	
Density of child population per acre under 15 years	59	
Death-rate in 1896	25.72	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	86.6	

Mention has been made of the Twentieth Ward under the head of the Sixteenth. Like that it has had no park space allowed it in the past. The St. John's Cemetery Park is now under way in the Ninth Ward and a new small park at Ninth avenue and Twenty-eighth street. This latter will be within the Twentieth Ward, but additional space is needed. The Committee recommends that a large public playground be established on the line of Ninth avenue in the neighborhood of Fortieth street. There is here a natural push-cart market, which suggests, as in Hester street, the need of facilities such as Colonel Waring proposes to furnish with his combination push-cart market and playground. It seems to your Committee a most happy solution of the problem of the Twentieth Ward to thus kill two birds with one stone. The peddler with his cart is as necessary to the housekeeper in a tenement as is a playground for her child. Both these wants can be met by adopting Colonel Waring's plan with actual profit instead of expense to the city.

The Committee would further suggest the establishment of a playground of generous size at or near the school at No. 515 West Thirty-seventh street. The neighborhood is especially in need of this provision for its children.

TWENTY-SECOND WARD.

Acreage	1,681	
Population	194,893	(very rapidly increasing.)
Density of population per acre	115.9	
Number of children under 15 years	49,347	
Density per acre of child population under 15 years	29	
Death-rate in 1896	21.92	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	83.3	

From present indications the trend of the population northward will within a few years crowd this ward to repletion. Already there are blocks within it, as shown by the recent sociological canvass, that come close to the ominous records of the past. Five blocks of tenements between Forty-eighth and Sixty-second streets west of Ninth avenue contain already over 3,000 persons each. As yet these tenements are comparatively new and the crowding in them is not as harmful in consequence as it will be later on. But they are growing older while the population is being many times increased. There are four times and over as many people in the Twenty-second Ward to-day as there were thirty years ago.

The police records show many sore spots where there is trouble with the boys who have no place to play other than the street. The sociological canvass found in the Fifteenth Assembly District, which embraces, roughly speaking, the district between Forty-third and Fifty-third streets west of Eighth avenue, one saloon to every four hundred persons and a church to every 4,500. The frontage of churches, schools and clubs measured 756 feet, while the aggregated saloon fronts stretched themselves over a whole mile. So that, says the report, "the saloon social ideals are minting themselves upon the people's minds at the rate of seven saloon thoughts to one educational thought."

In such a neighborhood, with a population of 200,000 souls, with not one library and but a single kindergarten, a small park must become an educational factor of the first class. The Committee recommends the acquisition of two blocks of land on the North river shore between Fifty-second and Fifty-fourth streets, now vacant or covered with worthless shanties, for such purpose. The land is high and peculiarly adapted for a park. Forty pastors and managers of all the charitable and philanthropic concerns in the vicinity join in asking for the selection of this site, than which there is not another so fit on the whole west side. It is believed, furthermore, that this land can be at present acquired cheaply. While it may be good economy to tear out a whole block of unwholesome tenements at four times

the cost of vacant land, yet it is to be remembered also, where such a waterside park can be got, that in taking it one gets, as Mr. Olmstead once said, "for every one acre of land a thousand acres of space and fresh air."

A recreation pier is to be built at the foot of Fiftieth street, and this with the small park now advised ought to provide for those residents of the ward who are too far from Central Park to reach it easily a reasonable allotment of space.

TWELFTH WARD.

Acreage	5,920	
Population	364,412	(rapidly increasing).
Density of population per acre	61.6	
Number of children under 15 years	104,059	
Density of child population under 15 years	17.5	
Death-rate in 1896	20.24	
General death-rate of city, 1896	21.52	
Death-rate of children under 5 years	79.4	

The Twelfth Ward embraces the whole of Manhattan Island above Eighty-sixth street, and has more park space, present and to come, than all the other island wards together. The section along the East river is, however, already crowded with a dense tenement population. In what has come to be known as "Little Italy," a small park is now being laid out under the Law of 1887. This, together with a recreation pier established at One Hundred and Twelfth street, will give needed relief to that section at present.

For the claims of the future the Committee refers to the map accompanying this report. As will be seen, a full score of new schools with playgrounds are to be built in the Twelfth Ward. They are so placed in response to the demand of increasing population that, if the suggestion of the Committee that their playgrounds be thrown open for public use be adopted, they will put that ward ahead of all the rest of the city for all time to come, in this respect. There will not be need of another small park in the Twelfth Ward.

The Committee rests its hopes and its case not only for the Twelfth Ward, but in the whole contention for school playgrounds, upon the simple showing of the map as here exhibited.

A part of the Twenty-third Ward above the Harlem falls within the district "below One Hundred and Fifty-fifth street," in which the Law of 1887 gives the Board of Street Opening and Improvement authority to lay out such and so many small parks as it shall deem necessary. The One Hundred and

Fifty-fifth street line cuts the ward in halves. But your Committee deems it inexpedient at present to discuss small parks for this district. St. Mary's Park and Cedar Park, the former with an area of twenty-eight acres, and the latter with seventeen and a half acres, are within this district, which is as yet but little built up. The density of the population in the Twenty-third Ward is only 19.1 persons to the acre, and it will be time enough later on to discuss for this part of New York the relief which small parks are intended to furnish to a pent up population.

The Committee wishes to emphasize a point which it had in view in the selection of the river shore strip under the bluff between Forty-ninth and Fifty-second streets as a site for a small park. It applies with peculiar force to playgrounds. It is not necessary always to look for a large plot for this purpose, particularly as children's playgrounds multiply about the city as they are sure to do now that their value is beginning to be appreciated. Any unused corner, triangle, or vacant lot kept out of the market by litigation, or otherwise, may serve this purpose well. Gymnastic apparatus, swings, sand heaps, etc., may be disposed of within the limits of a single lot, if nothing better is to be found. This has been done with success in Edinburgh and elsewhere abroad. Where the lot cannot be bought it may be leased. In fact, your Committee has already considered this as a proposition. There are such corners and lots to be found in various parts of the city, the property sometimes of the corporation, and these could be used to advantage and without expense.

In this, as in all large cities, there are quite too many human habitations and worthless buildings in isolated places which are little else than breeding spots of sin, disorder and disease. The yearly expense to the city of these places is much at all times, and often enormous, especially if their criminal history be considered. It seems to your Committee that the policy of their securement by the city for playground purposes is both economic and wise. Thus the local disease will be cured at a minimum expense, and the moral and physical status of coming manhood will be greatly advanced.

This pertains, perhaps, to a later day in this discussion. The Committee desires here merely to point out the fact. In the same way the question what a playground should properly be, and whether under police supervision as in England, or in charge of a gymnastic teacher—turnlehrer—as sometimes in Germany, may be left to a future not now far distant.

It remains to sum up the recommendations made in this report, and to place them in the order in which, in the judgment of your Committee, they ought to be carried out. Such a summary follows:

Your Committee recommend:

1. That half a block be taken for a public playground in Rivington street, between Goerck and Mangin streets, adjoining the public bath. To

this the Board of Street Opening and Improvement has already given its assent.

2. That the block between Houston and Stanton streets, Essex and Norfolk streets, in which stand Grammar School No. 13 and the pro-Cathedral Mission, be taken for a public park and playground, leaving the school and mission where they are.

3. That a public playground be established on Cherry Hill, on the site of Gotham Court, now demolished.

4. That a shore park be laid out between East Forty-ninth and East Fifty-second streets, on the strip of land on the water's edge, now used for the storage of old iron.

5. That a small park be laid out on the two blocks of high land, at present mostly vacant, west of Eleventh avenue, between Fifty-second and Fifty-fourth streets.

6. That half of the block bounded by Mulberry and Mott streets, Spring and Broome streets, be taken for a public playground for the Fourteenth Ward.

7. That a part of a block on the line of Ninth avenue, the site suggested being the eastern end of the block between Fifteenth and Sixteenth streets, be taken for a public playground for the children of the Sixteenth Ward.

8. That a section about 250 by 200 feet at the west end of the block between Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth streets, First and Second avenues, be taken for a public playground.

9. That the New York Marble Cemetery, in the block between Second and Third streets, Second avenue and the Bowery, be acquired, with the consent of the cemetery corporation, for a public playground.

10. That Colonel Waring's plan of uniting a playground and push-cart market in a block on the line of Hester street in the Tenth Ward be pressed upon the attention of the authorities as most necessary and desirable, with the request that they advocate it in the next Legislature.

11. That a public playground at least 200 feet square be established at or near Grammar School No. 82, First avenue and Seventieth street.

12. That a public playground at least 200 feet square be established at or near the public school at No. 515 West Thirty-seventh street.

13. That a public playground be established on the line of Ninth avenue near Fortieth street. It is suggested that for the reasons which apply to Hester street, Colonel Waring's push-cart and playground combination plan suits this locality also and could be carried out to advantage.

14. That the playgrounds of the new schools hereafter built, whether on roof or ground, be thrown open to the public out of school hours, and be made the general neighborhood recreation grounds.

The Committee further urge the City authorities to :

Establish without delay the promised public playgrounds at the foot of East Seventy-sixth street.

Have playgrounds made a part of every park which now has none, and to make in Central Park, especially, better arrangements for the children's play.

Take steps for the retransfer of the site on Randall's Island now used by the House of Refuge under a perpetual lease from the city, in order that a public park may be established there.

Turn all unused plots of city ground, wherever found, into children's playgrounds for the neighborhood use.

Represent to the Legislature the necessity of amending the Small Parks Act of 1887 so as to include playgrounds in its provisions, in order that the spirit of the law may be carried out to the full.

The Committee would finally suggest that all playground sites adjoining public schools which are here suggested, be referred to and discussed with the Board of Education before finally settled upon.

A rough estimate, well within the facts, of the cost of carrying out all these recommendations [exclusive of the two push-cart markets, which are expected to be a source of revenue, not of expense ; of the playground at the foot of East Seventy-sixth street, which is already provided for ; of the retransfer of Randall's Island, which is city property, and playgrounds to be attached to schools not yet built], puts the cost of them all at $3,580,000, well within four years' appropriation under the Small Parks Act. Thus, if the programme here laid down is carried out, what now constitutes the City of New York will, in the first year of the new century, have acquired, at a cost that may be fairly called comparatively insignificant a system of playgrounds and small breathing spaces which will put it as far ahead of most of the other large cities in this country as it is to-day behind those of the old world.

Respectfully submitted,

JOSEPH D. BRYANT,
CHARLES GEO. WILSON,
JOHN B. DEVINS,
Committee on Sites.

JACOB A. RIIS,
Secretary.

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COPY OF LETTER TO PRESIDENT OF BOARD OF EDUCATION.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF
THE MAYOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SMALL PARKS.
No. 301 MULBERRY STREET,
NEW YORK CITY, July 13, 1897.

Hon. CHARLES BULKLEY HUBBELL,
President Board of Education :

MY DEAR SIR—I am charged by the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Small Parks with drawing your attention to a matter of vital importance in our city's life, with the request that you lay it before the Board over which you preside. I do it the more readily as I am beforehand assured of your interest and sympathy by the many proofs your Board has given of a public spirit and a high appreciation of its great trust, evidence which has gathered to its support the thorough sympathy and support of a grateful community.

The matter concerns the children's play. The Committee on Small Parks was appointed, as you know, by the Mayor to advise upon the proper location of neighborhood parks and breathing spaces, particularly in the congested tenement districts. A study of the conditions prevailing there, of the statistics of population and mortality, and of the police reports concerning juvenile rowdyism together with the local causes for its growth and recurrence in certain neighborhoods, convinced the Committee that the chief need at present is a chance of natural and healthy play for the children who now have only the street for a playground. The police pointed out with absolute unanimity that this was at the bottom of all the early mischief that, from nothing worse than ball tossing and window breaking, grew under the necessary restraint imposed by police and ordinances into lawlessness of graver kind. Accordingly the Committee decided to turn its efforts toward procuring playgrounds for the children where they crowd most. That in this resolution it had the sympathy of the city government and the public, was shown by its experience in the Eleventh and Thirteenth Wards. A mere statement of the conditions prevailing there procured for it at once from the Board of Street Opening the promise of a half block in Rivington street. Proceedings looking to the establishment of the first municipal playground for New York's children will be begun as soon as the necessary legal formalities can be complied with.

Looking about for the best places to put other playgrounds, the Committee soon discovered that the school-house everywhere held the key to its problem. Where it stood the children were. Where these swarmed most densely, there were school-houses within a few blocks of each other and

new and greater ones planned. Reference to a map prepared by the Committee showing the more or less turbulent districts and the school sites acquired or in process of being acquired by your Board shows that seventeen of these new school-houses fall within the districts toward which the police reports point. It was the knowledge that the new school buildings must under the law, which most properly first associated the child's play with his school, have open air playgrounds attached to them, that suggested to the Committee the possibility of making the school playground the public neighborhood playground also, and so of solving at once its own problem and adding its mite to your own successful effort to bind the boy and the school together with a band not easily to be broken.

It is this proposition which the Committee wishes most earnestly to commend to you and your Board. The children must have playgrounds, and so must the schools for the children's sake. Will you not consider the feasibility of so planning these new schools that their playgrounds may be made the public playgrounds for their neighborhoods after school hours? The Committee is aware that there are difficulties in the way of carrying out this plan, but it is convinced that they can be overcome. A roof playground may with very slight expense for providing independent approaches and exits be transformed into a most popular roof garden with all its beneficent possibilities for a crowded tenement-house neighborhood. The roof garden of the Hebrew Institute in East Broadway is a case in point. A surface playground offers apparently no other obstacle to general use than that of supervision. The attitude of the Mayor and the city government toward this question warrants the belief that this will cause no real embarrassment. The chief requirement in the case of the playground is that it shall be large enough.

I need not point out to you that so far from being a matter foreign to the educational interests of your Board and the schools, it bears the closest relationship to them. Not all the schools in the world can make up to the child the virtual loss of his childhood that is involved in denying to him the chance of healthy, undisturbed play. It is not necessary to take the testimony of the police in this. Froebel, the great teacher, laid it down as a cardinal rule of all child-training that "play is the normal occupation of the child through which he begins to perceive moral relations," and that he "learns by doing." It is upon this principle that all the successful kindergarten work of your schools is built. To give the child the playground he needs is but to carry its teachings from the school-room into the street which has owned him heretofore. What kind of moral relations he has perceived in the past in the playground that was set always between two gutters, and what he "learned by doing," where the natural game was playing "getting arrested," I need not here remind you. We have known it to our cost. We

know also now the remedy. The laws which restore to the child his play and his childhood, the very existence of the Committee on whose behalf I address you, bear witness to it. I heartily congratulate you upon the opportunity of applying it. No greater or happier task could fall to any man or body of men.

The Committee is well aware that this is not a matter to be decided in haste. It does not wish you to do so. It submits the matter to you with full faith that you will give it the careful consideration it deserves. It believes that no happier solution of a grave question could be found, no fitter reparation made for a grievous wrong, than to make the future school playground the neighborhood resort for play and recreation. The Committee shall be most glad to confer with you and to give you any and all the aid that is in its power.

I am, sir, most faithfully,

Your very obedient servant,

(Signed) JACOB A. RIIS,
Secretary Committee on Small Parks.

Schedule, Giving Dimensions of Playgrounds in Several New School Buildings.

	Location of School.	Inside Playground. Square Feet.	Outside Playground. Square Feet.	Roof Playground. Square Feet.
5 A.	88th st., between 2d and 3d aves.	14,068	4,751	.....
5 A.	East 4th st., between Avenues C and B.	5,242	2,374	.....
6 A.	91st st. and 1st ave.	9,257	3,319	.....
7 A.	Henry, Oliver and Catharine sts.	11,229	2,928	8,639
12 A.	East Broadway, Henry, Scammel and Gouverneur sts.	11,014	5,040	8,348
14 A.	Hester st., between Orchard and Ludlow sts.	10,996	6,424	12,206
15 A.	77th st. and Avenue A	15,142	4,916	.....
5 B.	Suffolk and Rivington sts	11,574	3,955	7,665
7 B.	119th and 120th sts., between 2d and 3d aves.	12,560	10,025	.....
11 C.	89th st., between Columbus and Amsterdam aves	11,388	8,430	.....
15 C.	108th and 109th sts., between Amsterdam ave. and Boulevard	13,670	18,650	.....
13 A.	Rivington st., between Forsyth and Eldridge sts	12,565	2,775	10,787

July 28, 1897.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT, CITY OF NEW YORK.

Death-rate by Wards from 1865 to 1896, inclusive.

WARD.	1865.	1870.	1875.	1880.	UNITED STATES CENSUS, 1890.	POLICE CENSUS, 1895.	1896.	DEATH-RATE OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS.
1st	70.75	30.63	36.64	30.21	47.12	35.42	37.29	113.5
2d	50.25	34.30	49.40	24.88	59.20	39.50	48.28	153.8
3d	21.09	20.99	26.06	19.26	15.14	20.68	22.14	51.5
4th	45.70	27.62	35.19	33.79	41.38	41.34	36.31	123.5
5th	45.26	27.58	29.84	32.72	31.00	34.37	28.70	95.4
6th	45.81	34.32	35.74	33.87	36.98	28.21	26.87	82.
7th	32.22	24.97	31.59	29.70	31.05	24 45	20.39	63.
8th	38.21	26.21	34.03	33.03	41.22	33.28	27.70	90.
9th	29.82	23.27	27.75	25.20	27.19	27.63	26.26	94.
10th	29.33	24.03	33.37	30.03	23.61	23.09	17.94	57.3
11th	26.72	27.31	31.63	26.53	22.16	22.73	19.29	55.4
12th	46.85	45.61	25.45	24.62	23.80	20.99	20.24	79.4
13th	30.69	27.03	30.69	30.48	25.13	18.67	17.79	61.
14th	35.84	28.76	33.15	33.14	40.86	36.70	34.30	130.4
15th	18.07	35.92	22.91	19.20	28.27	25.25	21.67	99.1
16th	25.28	20.86	24.89	24.66	28.31	23.59	22.55	80.3
17th	27.09	25.92	29.52	25.60	25.81	24.68	20.85	70.9
18th	27.26	23.20	27.29	25.70	26.21	25.75	22.09	95.5
19th	64.82	40.52	25.63	23.26	22.58	20.31	17.77	85.9
20th	31.49	25.38	31.85	28.31	31.27	26.79	25.72	86.6
21st	43.99	36.80	27.00	23.51	26.68	22.94	21.59	99.8
22d	27.85	23.71	32.06	26.32	25.69	22.36	21.92	83.3
23d	.....	.....	29.72	24.84	25.32	21.81	23.28	73.9
24th	. .	.....	28.21	21.22	20.31	15.79	20.93	108.4
Total	34.20	28.84	29.47	26.47	26.46	23.24	21.52	76.4

General death-rate of city—21.52.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT, CITY OF NEW YORK.

Population of Wards by Census from 1865 *to* 1895, *inclusive.*

WARD.	DATE OF FORMATION.	ACREAGE.	1865.	1870.	1875.	1880.	UNITED STATES CENSUS, 1890.	POLICE CENSUS, 1890.	POLICE CENSUS, 1895.
1st.....	1791	173.8	9,852	14,463	14,298	17,939	11,122	12,075	12,508
2d.....	1791	78.0	1,194	1,312	1,012	1,608	929	1,510	1,038
3d.....	1791	104.0	3,367	3,715	2,874	3,582	3,765	3,418	4,014
4th.....	1791	83.3	17,352	23,748	20,828	20,996	17,809	19,337	18,405
5th.....	1791	160.2	18,205	17,150	15,951	15,845	12,385	12,949	10,603
6th.....	1791	101.1	19,754	21,353	19,861	20,196	23,119	23,058	22,897
7th.....	1791	206.0	36,962	44,818	45,636	50,066	57,366	62,139	74,227
8th.....	1803	177.1	30,098	34,913	32,465	35,879	31,220	41,890	31,374
9th.....	1803	305.0	38,504	47,609	49,403	54,596	54,425	60,243	60,987
10th.....	1808	109.0	31,537	41,431	41,757	47,554	57,596	64,076	70,168
11th.....	1875	213.0	58,953	64,230	63,855	68,778	75,426	83,337	86,722
12th.....	1825	5,920.0	28,259	47,497	60,510	81,800	245,046	275,587	364,412
13th.....	1827	109.0	26,388	33,364	34,013	37,797	45,884	51,649	58,802
14th.....	1827	108.0	23,382	26,436	26,453	30,171	28,094	30,752	31,904
15th.....	1832	225.0	25,572	27,587	25,529	31,882	25,399	32,707	26,216
16th.....	1836	318.0	41,972	48,359	48,235	52,188	49,134	61,419	57,430
17th.....	1837	266.0	79,563	95,365	101,075	104,837	103,158	107,737	114,727
18th.....	1846	500.0	47,613	59,593	61,295	66,621	63,270	70,299	67,469
19th.....	1850	1,851.0	39,945	86,090	118,727	158,191	234,846	257,766	267,076
20th.....	1851	418.7	61,884	75,407	79,764	86,015	84,327	93,844	94,969
21st.....	1853	380.0	38,669	56,703	58,231	66,536	63,019	78,689	72,144
22d.....	1853	1,681.0	47,361	71,349	83,420	111,606	153,877	184,979	194,893
23d.....	1874	4,267.0	.....	.....	24,320	28,338	53,948	60,445	81,567
24th.....	1874	8,050.3	.....	.....	11,874	13,288	20,137	20,810	26,508
Total.....	....	25,804.5	726,385	942,292	1,041,886	1,206,299	1,515,301	1,710,715	1,851,060

CHAPTER 320.

AN ACT to provide for the location, acquisition, construction and improvement of additional public parks in the city of New York.

Passed May 13, 1887; three-fifths being present.

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The board of street opening and improvement of the city of New York is hereby authorized and empowered to select, locate and lay out such and so many public parks in the city of New York, south of One Hundred and Fifty-ninth street, as the said board may from time to time determine. It shall be lawful for the said board, and for all persons acting under its authority and by its direction to enter in the day time into and upon any and all lands, tenements and hereditaments which said board shall deem necessary to be surveyed, used or converted for the laying out, surveying and monumenting of any parks so selected as aforesaid, and the said board shall cause two similar maps or plans and profiles of the said parks to be made, showing the location and boundaries of such parks, accompanied with such field notes and explanatory remarks as the nature of the subject shall require, which maps, plans and profiles, together with such notes and remarks, shall be certified to by the chairman of said board, or by one of the members thereof designated by said board for that purpose, before any person authorized by law to take acknowledgments of deeds within the county of New York, and shall be filed, one in the office of the register of the city and county of New York, and one in the department of public parks in said city. In the case of each park selected, located and laid out as herein provided, the said board of street opening and improvement shall have the power to determine, in its discretion, whether any, and if any, what proportion of the expense to be incurred in acquiring the land for such park shall be assessed upon the property, persons and estates to be benefited by the acquisition and construction of such park, and in each case in which said board shall determine that any part of such expense shall be so assessed, the said board shall also determine the area within which such part of said expense shall be so assessed. If any street, avenue or public place, or any part of any street, avenue or public place, shall be included within the limits of any park selected, located and laid out as herein provided, the said board of street opening and improvement shall have the power and is hereby authorized to close and discontinue the same so far as the same is included within the limits of such park. The surveys, maps, plans and profiles provided for in this section shall be done and made upon the requisition of the board of street opening and improvement by the department of public parks,

and the cost and expense thereof may be charged against and met and paid out of any appropriation made for said department, in the discretion of the board of parks.

§ 2. Whenever, and as often as the said board of street opening and improvement shall determine, that any of the public parks, selected, located and laid out as hereinbefore provided, should be opened and the title to the lands embraced therein should be acquired by the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York for the purposes of such public parks, the said board, by the counsel to the corporation of said city, is hereby authorized to make application to a special term of the supreme court in and for the first department for the appointment of commissioners of estimate, and the said court shall thereupon name three discreet and disinterested persons, being citizens of the city of New York, as such commissioners of estimate, for the purpose of performing the duties hereinafter mentioned in that behalf prescribed. Twenty days' notice of such application shall be published in the City Record and in at least two other public newspapers published in the city of New York. The said board may in its discretion include in one proceeding an application for the opening of as many of the aforesaid parks as in the judgment of said board the public interests may require. Upon the appointment of said commissioners they shall severally take and subscribe an oath or affirmation, before some officer authorized to administer oaths, faithfully to perform the trusts and duties required of them by this act; which oaths shall be annexed to and filed with their report, and it shall be the duty of said commissioners, after having viewed the said lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises required for the purpose of said park or parks, and the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises included within the area of assessment fixed and determined by the board of street opening and improvement, as hereinbefore provided, if said board shall have fixed such an area, to make a just and equitable estimate of the loss and damage to the respective owners, lessees, parties and persons respectively entitled to or interested in the said lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises, and to make report thereof to the said supreme court without unnecessary delay. In each and every case in which the said board of street opening and improvement shall have determined that a portion of the expense to be incurred in acquiring the land for such parks shall be assessed upon the property, persons and estates to be benefited by the acquisition and construction of such park, the said commissioners of estimate shall make a just and equitable estimate and assessment of the loss and damage, if any, over and above the benefit and advantage, or of the benefit and advantage, if any, over and above the loss and damage, as the case may be, to the respective owners, lessees, parties and persons respectively entitled unto or

interested in the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises so required for the purpose aforesaid, and a just and equitable estimate and assessment also of the value of the benefit and advantage of said public park to the respective owners, lessees, parties and persons respectively entitled unto or interested in the respective lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises embraced within the area of assessment fixed and determined as hereinbefore provided by said board of street opening and improvement and not required for the purpose of opening said public park.

§ 3. In each and all and every case and cases where the owners or parties interested, or their respective estates and interests, are unknown, or not fully known to the said commissioners, it shall be sufficient for them to estimate and to set forth and state in their said reports, in general terms, the respective sums to be allowed and paid to the owners and proprietors generally of such lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises, and parties interested therein, for the loss and damage to such owners, proprietors and parties interested in respect of the whole estate and interest of whomsoever may be entitled unto or interested in said lands, hereditaments and premises, respectively, by and in consequence of the taking the same for the purposes in this act provided, without specifying the names of the estate or interests of such owners, proprietors and parties interested, or either of them; and upon the coming of said report, signed by the said commissioners or a majority of them, the said supreme court shall, by order, upon the application of the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, after hearing any matter which may be alleged against the same, either confirm the said report, in whole or in part, or refer the same back to the same commissioners for revisal and correction, or to new commissioners to be appointed by the said court, to reconsider the subject-matter thereof, and the said commissioners, to whom the said report shall be so referred, shall return the said report corrected and revised, or a new report to be made by them, as aforesaid, in the premises, to the said court, without unnecessary delay; and the same, on being so returned, shall be confirmed or again referred by the said court, as justice shall require; and such report, when confirmed by the said court, shall be final and conclusive as well upon the said mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York as upon the owners, lessees, persons and parties interested in and entitled to the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises mentioned in the said report, and also upon all other persons whomsoever. And on the final confirmation of said report, the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York shall become and be seized in fee of the lands included in said report, the same to be appropriated, converted and used to and for the aforesaid purposes accordingly; and thereupon the said mayor, aldermen and com-

monalty, by the department of public parks, shall immediately take possession of the same without any suit or proceeding at law for that purpose, and all leases and other contracts in regard to said land so taken or any part thereof, and all covenants, contracts or engagements between landlord and tenant, or any other contracting parties shall, upon the confirmation of such reports, respectively cease and determine, and be absolutely discharged according to law.

§ 4. The said commissioners of estimate, at least thirty days before they present their report to the supreme court, shall deposit a true report or transcript of such estimate, in the office of the department of public parks of the city of New York, for the inspection of whomsoever it may concern, and shall give daily notice by advertisement in the newspapers mentioned in the second section of this act, for thirty days after depositing such report as aforesaid, of the said deposit thereof in the said office and of the day on which such report will be presented to the said court; and any person or persons whose rights may be affected thereby, and who may object to the same or any part thereof, may, within thirty days after the first publication of such notice, set forth their objections to the same in writing to the said commissioners, who shall, after hearing the parties so objecting, thereupon reconsider their said estimate and assessment, or the part or parts thereof so objected to, and in case the same shall appear to them to require correction, but not otherwise, they shall and may correct the same accordingly.

The said mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York shall, within four calendar months after the confirmation of said report, pay to the parties entitled thereto the respective sum or sums so estimated and reported in their favor respectively, with lawful interest from the date of such confirmation, and in default thereof said persons or parties respectively, his, her or their respective heirs, executors, administrators, successors or assigns may sue for and recover the same, with lawful interest from and after demand therefor, and the cost of suit.

§ 5. Whenever the owners and proprietors of any lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises to be taken for any of the purposes aforesaid, or the party or parties, person or persons interested therein, or in whose favor any such sum or sums or compensation shall be so reported, shall be under the age of twenty-one years, non compis* mentis, feme covert or absent from the city of New York; and also in all cases where the name or names of the owner or owners, parties or persons entitled unto or interested in any lands, tenements, hereditaments or premises that may be so taken for any of the purposes aforesaid, shall not be set forth or mentioned in the said report; or where the said owners, parties or persons respectively, being named therein, cannot upon diligent inquiry be found, it shall be lawful for

the said mayor, aldermen and commonalty to pay the sum or sums mentioned in said report, payable or that would be coming to such owners, proprietors, parties and persons respectively, into the supreme court, to be secured, disposed of, improved and paid out as the court sitting at general term for said district shall direct; and such payment shall be as valid and effectual in all respects as if made to the said owners, proprietors, parties and persons respectively, themselves, according to their just rights, if they had been known, and had all been present, of full age, discovert, and compis* mentis; and provided, also, that in all and each and every case and cases where any such sum or sums or compensation so to be reported by the said commissioners in favor of any person or persons, party or parties, whatsoever, whether named or not named in said report, shall be paid to any person or persons, party or parties, whatsoever, when the same shall of right belong and ought to have been paid to some other person or persons, party or parties, it shall be lawful for the person or persons, or party or parties to whom the said ought to have been paid, to sue for and recover the same, with lawful interest and costs of suit, as so much money had and received to his or their use, by the person or persons, party or parties, respectively, to whom the same shall have been so paid. The said commissioners shall include and set forth in their said report the name of the respective owners, lessees, parties and persons entitled unto or interested in the said report, and each and every part and parcel thereof, as far forth as the same shall be ascertained by them, and add a sufficient designation and description of such respective lands and parcels of land aforesaid, and also the several respective sums estimated as and for the compensation and recompense or allowance to be made for the loss and damage of the respective owners of the fee or inheritance of such said lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises respectively, and for the loss and damage of the respective owners of the leasehold estate, or their interest therein separately. And the said commissioners shall also include in said report the amount of their fees, and all costs and disbursements for expenses for services, maps and other things.

§ 6. In case of the death, resignation or refusal to act of any such commissioner of estimate appointed as hereinbefore provided, it shall and may be lawful for the court aforesaid, or any one of the justices thereof, on the application of the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, as often as such event shall happen, to appoint a discreet and disinterested person, being a citizen of the said city of New York, in the place and stead of such commissioner so dying, resigning or refusing to act, and the surviving or acting commissioners, as the case may be, shall have full power to proceed in the execution of the duties of their appointment until a

* So in original.

successor to the commissioner so dying, resigning or refusing to act shall be appointed.

§ 7. In each and every case of the appointment of commissioners under this act, it shall be competent and lawful for any two of such commissioners so appointed as aforesaid to proceed to and execute and perform the trusts and duties of their said appointment, and their acts shall be as valid and effectual as the acts of all the commissioners so to be appointed if they had acted together would have been; and, further, in all cases the acts, proceedings and decisions of a major part of such of the commissioners as shall be acting in the premises shall be as binding, valid and effectual as if the said commissioners named and appointed for such purpose had all concurred and joined therein. The commissioners appointed under and by virtue of this title who shall enter upon the duties of their appointment shall each be entitled to receive such compensation as shall be awarded by the court upon the confirmation of their respective reports, not exceeding ten dollars for each day they shall respectively be actually employed in the duties of their appointment, besides all reasonable expenses, to be taxed and allowed by said court, for maps, surveys, clerk hire and other necessary expenses and disbursements, and the same shall be included in and considered and paid as part of the expense of acquiring the respective public parks.

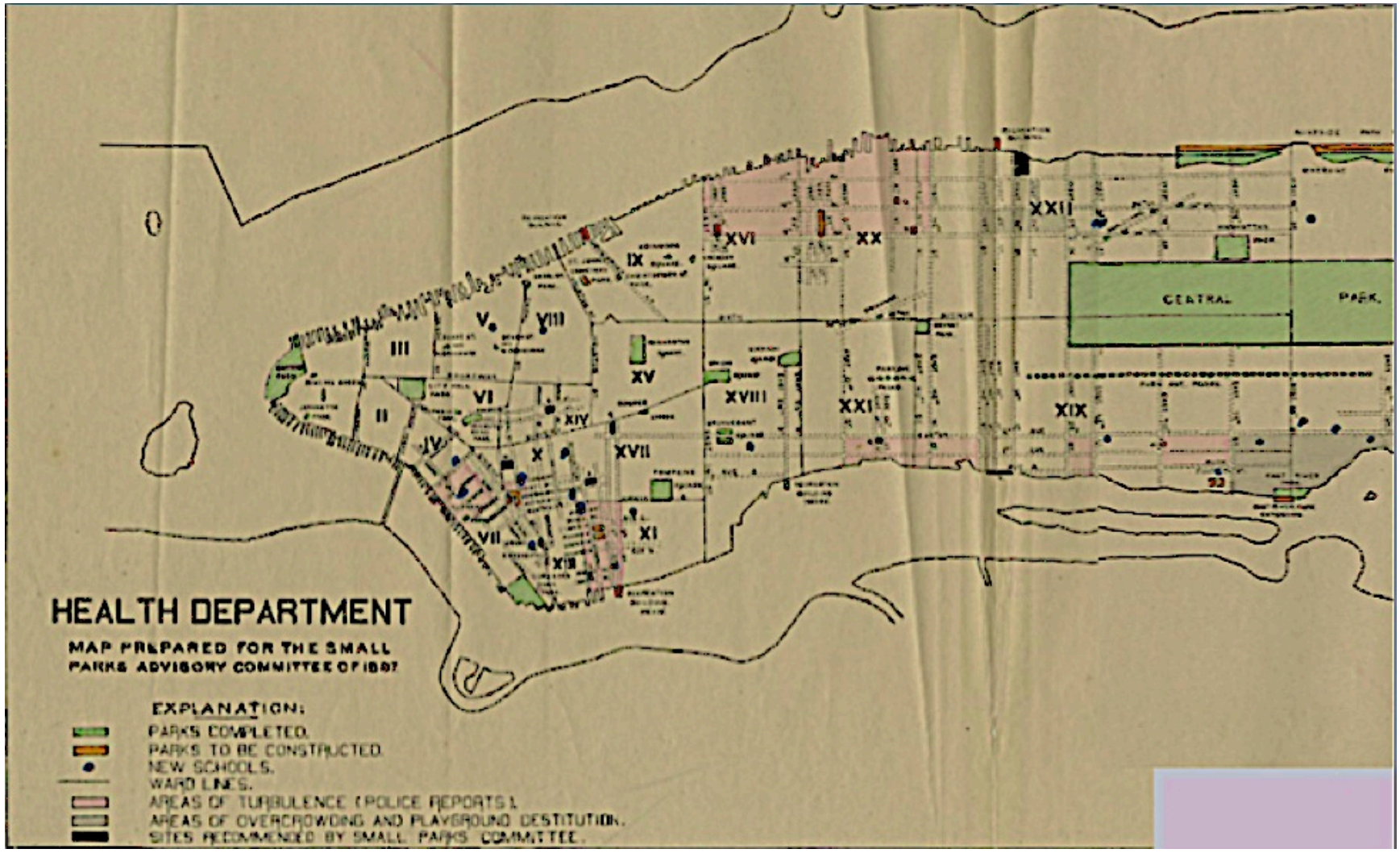
§ 8. The respective sums so as aforesaid to be assessed by said commissioners upon the owners, occupants and parties seized or possessed of or interested in the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises mentioned in the report of said commissioners, and reported by said commissioners as and for the allowance to be made by the parties and persons respectively in the said report mentioned or referred to, and intended as owners and proprietors of or parties interested in lands and premises deemed to be benefited for the benefit and advantage to be derived from the acquisition and construction of said public park or parks mentioned in said report shall be a lien or charge on the lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises in the said report mentioned, or upon the estate and interest of the respective owners, lessees and parties interested in said lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises for or on account of which the said respective sums shall be so assessed by said commissioners upon the said respective owners and proprietors thereof and parties interested therein. As well the said owners and proprietors thereof and parties interested therein, and also the occupants and each and every one of them, shall moreover be respectively liable to pay on demand the respective sum or sums or assessments mentioned in said report, at which the respective lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises so owned and occupied by him, her or them, or wherein he, she or they are so interested, or at which the owners or proprietors thereof shall be so assessed, to such person or persons as the comptroller of the city of New

York shall appoint to receive the same. The said respective sums or assessments, with lawful interest from the date of the confirmation of the report, may be* received with all costs and charges by action by the said mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, from and against the parties assessed, or the owner or owners of the respective lands, tenements, hereditaments and premises whereon, or in respect of which, the same may be assessed or set forth in the said report of the said commissioners, or from or against any or either of the said parties or owners without joining any other or others of them, the said parties or owners.

§ 9. The department of public parks of the city of New York shall be vested and charged with the care, custody and construction of said parks, when the same shall have been acquired, as hereinbefore provided, and shall be and hereby are authorized and empowered to construct the said parks in such manner, and to erect and furnish therein for public purposes, for the comfort, health and instruction of the people, such and so many buildings as the said department of public parks, with the concurrence of the board of estimate and apportionment, shall determine to be necessary and expedient.

§ 10. For the payment of all expenses to be incurred under the authority of this act, including the damages awarded and expenses incurred upon the acquisition of land and of estates and interests therein, and the construction of said parks, and the erection and furnishing of buildings therein, the comptroller of the city of New York shall issue from time to time bonds or stock of the mayor, aldermen and commonalty of the city of New York, to be payable from taxation and redeemable in not less than ten nor more than thirty years from the date of issue, in such amounts as shall be necessary to carry out the purposes of this act, and the mayor and comptroller are hereby authorized and directed to sign said bonds, and it shall be the duty of the clerk of the common council of said city to countersign the same and to affix thereto the seal of said city. Said bonds shall bear interest at a rate to be fixed by the comptroller, not exceeding four per centum per annum, and shall not be disposed of at less than the par value thereof. But no contract shall be entered into or liability incurred for the construction of any of said parks, or for the erection of any building therein, until the plans for such construction or erection, and, in the case of a building, an estimate of the cost thereof, shall have been prepared by the department of public parks and submitted to and approved by the board of estimate and apportionment of said city. But no more than the sum of one million of dollars shall be expended or authorized to be expended in any one year under the provisions of this act.

* So in original.


HEALTH DEPARTMENT
MAP PREPARED FOR THE SMALL PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF 1887
EXPLANATION:
PARKS COMPLETED.
PARKS TO BE CONSTRUCTED.
NEW SCHOOLS.
WARD LINES.
AREAS OF TURBULENCE (POLICE REPORTS).
AREAS OF OVERCROWDING AND PLAYGROUND DESTITUTION.
SITES RECOMMENDED BY SMALL PARKS COMMITTEE.
CENTRAL PARK.
I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI
XII
XIII
XIV
XV
XVI
XVII
XVIII
XIX
XX
XXI
XXII

XII
XIII
XIV
VAN CORTLANDT PARK

Appendix C: Historic Preservation and Cultural Landscapes

In the practice of historic preservation, more typically than not, we discuss the preservation of historic structures or districts. Standards and guidelines created by the United States Secretary of the Interior, and overseen by the National Park Service, help us to determine which of those structures or districts we can categorize as legally preservable and therefore, legally protected, by having them declared National Historic Landmarks or Historic Districts. These landmarks must be of national value to the American people and their history by possessing one or more of the following characteristics:

> "National significance: districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that have exceptional value or quality, while possessing a "high degree of integrity of location design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association" in illustrating United States heritage in its example of "history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture:"[1]

a. Associated with events important to U.S. History;
b. Associated with people nationally significant to U.S. History;
c. Represent a great idea or ideal of the American people;
d. Embody exceptionally valuable architectural typology, period, style or construction;
e. Association with significant or historical artistic merit or commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture;
f. Has or may be reasonably expected to reveal data about new cultures or periods of occupation affecting theories, concepts and ideas to a major degree.

When we discuss preservation of "cultural landscapes," our focus shifts away from buildings or structures and towards land and people and the interaction of the two. A building, barring natural or man-made catastrophes, will remain largely the same over a long period of time, provided that regular maintenance and care is given to the building. Landscape, however, changes frequently, especially if it does not receive frequent care and maintenance. It can change because of weather, plant and tree growth or loss, incorrect substitutions, redesign by subsequent land users, or reallocation of the land for other uses. According to the National Park Service, a cultural landscape is defined as:

[1] "Criteria of National Historic Landmarks," *National Preservation Act of 1966*, 65.4

> "A geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with an historic event, activity or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. Cultural landscapes can include residential gardens, community parks, scenic highways, rural communities, institutional grounds, cemeteries, battlefields, and zoological gardens. Their character defining features contribute to the landscape 's physical appearance as it has evolved over time. In addition to vegetation and topography, cultural landscapes may include water features, such as ponds, streams, and fountains; circulation features, such as roads, paths, steps, and walls; buildings; and furnishings, including fences, benches, lights and sculptural objects."[2]
>
> "Most historic properties have a cultural landscape component that is integral to the significance of the resource…an historic property consists of all its cultural resources: landscapes, buildings, archeological sites and collections. In some cultural landscapes, there may be a total absence of buildings."[3]

There are four general types of cultural landscapes, not necessarily mutually exclusive:[4]

1. **Historic Designed Landscape:** a consciously designed landscape by a either a landscape architect, master gardener, architect or horticulturist, according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized style or tradition. The landscape may be associated with a significant person(s), trend, or event in landscape architecture; or illustrate an important development in the theory and practice of landscape architecture. Aesthetic values play a significant role in designed landscapes. Examples include parks, campuses, and estates.
2. **Historic Vernacular Landscape:** landscape that evolves through use by people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape. Through social or cultural attitudes of an individual, family or a community, the landscape reflects the physical, biological, and cultural character of those lives. The land's function plays a significant role in vernacular landscapes. Single properties, such as a farm, or a collection of properties, such as a district of historic farms along a river valley can form a vernacular landscape. Other examples: rural villages, industrial complexes, and agricultural landscapes.
3. **Historic Site:** landscape significant for its association with a historic event, person or activity. Examples include battlefields and president's house properties.
4. **Ethnographic Landscape:** landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people defined as heritage resources. Included are contemporary settlements, sacred sites and massive geological structures. Small plant communities, animals, subsistence and ceremonial grounds are often components.

The eight parks created from the Small Parks Act are part of a larger movement in the United States called the Small Parks Movement. This occurred when cities' populations grew exponentially fast and city leaders either acted as those in New York City did by condemning

[2] Charles A. Birnbaum, "Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes," *National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior,* Washington, DC: September 1994, 1.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

land and demolishing slums to create the parks or by purchasing the land outside of the denser city areas and then, protectively zoning it as parklands not to be used otherwise, so that when their populations expanded, those park areas were already set aside.

Given that the people involved in the design and re-designs of these small parks were of notable national historic importance, and because the construction of these parks were part of a broader national parks movement, these small parks, as a collection of eight parks, should be considered city, state and national treasures. Given their importance, a strategy should be employed to preserve that which is still preservable within these cultural landscapes. To preserve cultural landscapes, the Secretary of the Interior recommends that a series of steps and planning must be taken to develop a comprehensive plan that avoids doing irreversible damage to the existing cultural landscape. The result of these steps is called a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR). This report includes several important components:[5]

1. **Historical Research:** using primary sources, such historic maps, drawings, photos, geological surveys, aerial photos, postcards, engravings, original or copies of the original landscape plans, journals, newspapers, construction drawings, plant lists, magazines, paintings, glass lantern slides, nursery catalogues, tax maps, surveys and soil profiles help to create as historically comprehensive an understanding as possible of the original landscape. Secondary sources such as monographs, published histories, theses, National Register forms, survey data, local preservation plans, state contexts and scholarly articles can help to give a current perspective to the historical cultural landscape.[6]
2. **Preparation of Period Plans.** The Secretary of the Interior recommends the creation of period landscape plans in addition to an as-built plan of existing conditions of the cultural landscape. Though original landscape plans may be found, it does not necessarily mean that the plan was fully implemented. Creating an as-built plan for the original landscape as well as one for each owner, occupancy or development. Noted on the plan should be indication of the original design; any secondary source plans should be so noted on the as-built drawings.[7]
3. **Inventory and Documentation of Existing Conditions:** Differences from layer to layer of use should be noted here, and changes in the land both topographically, as well as in

[5] Charles A. Birnbaum, "Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes," *National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior,* Washington, DC: September 1994, 4.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid, 4-5.

its use as landscape. This would include determining any changes in the boundaries of the land, or methodologies of design or use. Conditions assessment also includes an analysis of any possible disrepair or damage within the cultural landscape.[8]

4. **Existing Condition Plans/Site Analysis**: using historic sources noted above, determine features that contribute to the landscapes historic character. If these features are from different eras, this should be noted. Any historic plant material, trees, structures, walls, pathways, etc. should be noted here, as well as any structures, stone or water features. An analysis to determine its integrity, the property's survival of historic characteristics should weigh heavily in this component of the CLR. The seven qualities of integrity are "location, setting, feeling, association, design, workmanship, and materials.[9]

With this documentation, an analysis of the cultural landscape's continuity and change can begin in an effort to determine the landscape's period(s) of significance and contributing elements of integrity to those periods; the landscape can then be placed in its historic context with similar cultural landscapes.[10] Also, from the CLR, a preservation treatment plan can be created. Options for treatment on an historic cultural landscape do not differ, in theory, from the options for treatment of an historic structure; in both cases, there are four options, listed here in order of recommended preference by the Secretary of the Interior, from least invasive to most invasive:

1. **Preservation**: measures and strategies are used to maintain integrity of the cultural landscape. Original materials and design still extant should remain so to the best of one's ability. New additions are not part of this choice, though upgrading of mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems to bring the landscape "up to code" is appropriate.[11]
2. **Rehabilitation**: creating a compatible use of the property with repairs, alterations and additions, while preserving that which conveys the property's historic or cultural value.[12]
3. **Restoration**: accurately depicting form, features and character of a significant period by removing other period's features while reconstructing the period's missing elements.[13]
4. **Reconstruction**: re-creation, via new construction, elements of a non-surviving site or landscape in order to replicate, in its historic location, its appearance at a specific time.[14]

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[8] Ibid, 6.
[9] Ibid
[10] Charles A. Birnbaum, "Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes," *National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior,* Washington, DC: September 1994, 6.
[11] Ibid, 9.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

This thesis includes some components of the work involved to create a Cultural Landscape Report for the collection of New York City's small parks created from the Small Parks Act of 1887, including extensive historical research and photographs, maps, plans and historic documents discovered. It also includes an analysis of each park's original and existing conditions, as well as any layers of redesign or change, as can best could be determined given documents discovered in research and on-site visits. Any historic elements of integrity found in the parks were noted. This thesis did not include prepared drawings of period or existing plans, at least, not by this author, nor does it offer an analysis of plant materials and foliage, as this author lacks the expertise to make such an analysis. Given the lack of plant analysis and period plan drawings, this thesis cannot offer a comprehensive preservation treatment plan for this collection of small parks.

Appendix D: Presidents & Commissioners 1887 – Present Department of Parks, City of New York

1886-1888: Henry R. Beekman (President), Borden, Crimmins & Powers

Small Parks Act; Chapter 320, Laws of 1887

1888: J. Hampden Robb (President), Borden, Waldo Hutchins & Stevenson Towle

1889: Borden (President), Hutchins, Robb & Towle (replaced by Albert Gallup 07.09.1889)

1890: Gallup (President), Borden (replaced by Nathan Straus 11.26.1890), Hutchins (died 04.1891; replaced by Abraham B. Tappen 04.24.1891) & Robb (replaced by Paul Dana 12.03.1890)

1891: Dana (President), Gallup, Straus & Tappen

1892: Tappen (President), Edward Bell, George C. Clausen (filling term of Albert Gallup), Dana, Henry Winthrop Gray & Straus

1893: Tappen (President), Gray, Clausen, Straus & Dana (resigned 03.30.1894)

1894: Tappen (President), Bell, Clausen & Straus (entire board replaced 02.18.1895: David H. King, Augustus D. Juilliard, George G. Haven & James A. Roosevelt)

1895: King (President), Juilliard, Haven & Roosevelt

1896: S.V. Cruger (President), Samuel McMillan, William A. Stiles & Smith Ely

1897: McMillian (President), Cruger, Ely & Stiles (died; replaced: Edward Mitchel 10.18.1897)

The Board of Commissioners resigned 12.31.1897; New Commissioners represented the new Greater NY

Parks Commissioners, Manhattan, 1898 to 1934

(Until 1919, when Richmond was renamed Staten Island, and was appointed its own Commissioner, both Richmond and Manhattan were overseen by one Commissioner)

1898-1901: George C. Clausen

1902: William R. Willcox

1904: John Pallas (replaced by Samuel Parsons 10.26.1905)

1906: Moses Herman (replaced by Samuel Parsons 9.13.1907; replaced by Henry Smith 11.25.1907)

1908: Henry Smith

1910-1913: Charles Stover (resigned 10.13.1913; replaced by Louis F. La Roche 12.01.1913)

1914-1917: Cabot Ward (replaced by Robert Volentine 11.12.1916)

1918-1919: William Grell

1919-1927: Francis D. Gallatin (replaced by Walter R. Herrick 05.12.1927)

1928-1933: Walter R. Herrick

1933-1934: John E. Sheehy

Unified City Parks Department Commissioners, 1934 to Present

1934-1960: Robert Moses (Mayors: LaGuardia, O'Dwyer, Impellitteri, and Wagner)

1960-1966: Newbold Morris (Mayor Wagner)

1966-1967: Thomas P.F. Hoving (Mayor Lindsay)

1967-1972: August Heckscher (Mayor Lindsay)

1973-1973: Richard M. Clurman (Mayor Lindsay)

1974-1975: Edwin L. Weisl, Jr. (Mayor Beame)

1975-1975: Alexander Wirin (Mayor Beame)

1976-1977: Martin Lang (Mayor Beame)

1977-1978: Joseph P. Davidson (Mayor Beame)

1978-1983: Gordon J. Davis (Mayor Koch)

1983-1990: Henry J. Stern (Mayor Koch)

1990-1993: Elisabeth (Betsy) F. Gotbaum (Mayor Dinkins)

1994-2002: Henry J. Stern (Mayor Giuliani)

2002-2012: Adrian Benepe (Mayor Bloomberg)

2012-Present: Veronica M. White (Mayor Bloomberg)

Source: New York City, Department of Parks, 2012.
http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/commissioners

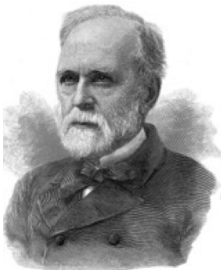
Appendix E: Mayors of New York City: 1886-Present

From 1849, New York City's Mayors were elected to two-year terms; their term changed to four years with the 1898 Consolidation. From 1902 to 1906, the terms were changed back to two years, followed once more, by four-year terms.

William R. Grace
Moses King, Notable New Yorkers, 1899, 18

William Russell Grace 1885-1886 Independent

Grace was the first Irish-born American elected as Mayor of New York. He ran opposed to Tammany Hall and conducted a reform administration; he attacked police scandals, patronage & organized vice. The city received the Statue of Liberty from France during Grace's tenure.



Abram S. Hewitt
Harper's Weekly, Oct. 20.1888: Photo: Falk

Abram S. Hewitt 1887-1888 Democrat

Hewitt worked his way through Columbia University to become a math professor, attorney, iron manufacturer, then U.S. Congressman, and then, Mayor. Married the sister of school friend, Edward Cooper, both children of industrialist/inventor Peter Cooper; co-founded Trenton Iron Company with the Coopers in 1844 (acquired by U.S. Steel in 1904); in 1858, co-founded Cooper Union with father in law. In 1871, was instrumental in bringing down Tammany's Tweed Ring. Brought the Small Parks Act to the NY Legislature in 1887; first small park would not open for another ten years. Started the process of burying the city's electrical wires, and advocated for a subway system. Disdaining corruption, Hewitt turned his back on Tammany Hall while Mayor, and that and his nativist leanings, insured his single term.

Hugh L Grant, King, Moses, *Notable New Yorkers*, 1986-9. 9,891910, 13.

Hugh L. Grant 1889-1892 Democrat

Two-term "Boy Mayor" Grant, at the age of thirty, was the youngest mayor in New York City's history. After the crippling effects of 1888's Blizzard on the city, he forced the city's utility companies to dismantle their complex networks of overhead wires and bury them underground. Closely connected to the Tammany network, his terms oversaw widespread corruption while still accomplishing significant change: he appointed the rapid transit commission, opening a door to the subway system and fought, unsuccessfully, the significant expansion of the Parks department with the purchase of what would become Pelham Bay and Van Cortlandt Parks.

Thomas F. Gilroy 1893-1894 Democrat

A Tammany Hall candidate, Mayor Gilroy was born in Ireland, worked in printing, but eventually was appointed Commissioner of Public Works, where he served for four years, 1889-1893, before being elected mayor.

William Strong
King, Moses, *Notable New Yorkers of 1896-1899*, 1899, 33

William L. Strong 1895-1897 Fusion

A Republican elected on a anti-Tammany Fusion ticket, reform Mayor Strong's tenure oversaw the creation of the first small parks, the Board of Education, and the appointment of Theodore Roosevelt as his rigorous vice

fighting Police Commissioner. Beginning as a dry goods clerk in Ohio, he eventually became president of a few banks, and Director of the Erie Canal. In 1887, Mulberry Bend Park opened to the delight of its neighborhood.

Robert A. Van Wyck 1898-1901 Democrat

Robert A. Van Wyck
Moses King, *Notable New Yorkers*, New York, 1899, 33

The first mayor of the consolidated Greater New York, Van Wyck replaced three mayors by defeating the Citizens' Union reformer candidate, Seth Low. City Court Chief Justice Van Wyck won the office with the support of Tammany Hall, but his four years in office saw some scandals, including the artificial inflation of fresh milk prices resulting from the Ice Trust scam. His administration granted the first subway contract, for $35 million, for construction of the Interborough Rapid Transit. Though T. Roosevelt's investigation into the Ice Trust Scam, which hurt the city's poorest the most, found no implication of Van Wyck, the scandal destroyed his political career and cost Tammany Hall the next mayoral election. Hudson Park opened in 1898, and Hamilton Fish Park opened in 1900; Carerre and Hastings, the architects of the new public library being built on Fifth Avenue, designed both of these parks.

Seth Low 1902-1903 Citizen's Union/Republican/Anti-Tammany Dem

Seth Low, 1901
Library of Congress

Motivated against the corruption during Van Wyck's administration, the Citizens Union promoted their candidate, Seth Low. A life long progressive, Low was both graduate and later President of Columbia University, where he oversaw the University's move from midtown to Morningside Heights, its campus designed by McKim, Mead and White. He gave $1 million of his inheritance to build Low Library, in honor of his father. A former Mayor of Brooklyn, where he was born, and later a delegate to the 1899 International Peace Conference at the Hague, Low's father was a leading China trader. Low declared his "consecration" to the "welfare of the people" in his inauguration speech and followed that with an honest, competent administration where he instituted civil service, a merit system for city employees, improved schools, lowered taxes, increased police department oversight to ban graft, and better streamlined government services. Serving one-term, three more small parks opened under Low: East River, John Jay, and Seward Park, the last was the first municipal playground in the United States. Later, he remained active in politics, served as labor issue mediator, and supported laborers' rights to collective bargaining.

George B. McClellan, Jr. 1904-1909 Democrat

George B. McClellan, Jr.
Pach Brothers Photo

The son of the well-known Civil War general who ran unsuccessfully against Abraham Lincoln for President, George McClellan, Jr. served in both academia and politics. A Princeton educated journalist, attorney, Congressman, and President of New York City's Board of Aldermen (pre-City Council), McClellan defeated Low with the support of Tammany Hall while remaining independent of their politics. His 1905 opponent, William Randolph Hearst, orchestrated bitter critiques of McClellan in his newspapers for the six years following his own defeat. In his second term, McClellan combated the city's vice and gambling,

destroying his political relationships with many Tammany beneficiaries; "There comes a time in every man's life when he must choose one course or another. I chose; I had to keep my self respect." His tenure oversaw dramatic increases in public works and infrastructure, including enlargement of the subway system, construction of the Queensboro and Manhattan bridges, the Municipal Building and the Catskill water system. Later, he taught Economics at Princeton University, served as a lieutenant colonel in World War I and authored several books on Italian history. During his tenure, DeWitt Clinton and St. Gabriel's Parks opened.

William Jay Gaynor 1910-1913 Democrat

William J. Gaynor
King, Moses, *Notable New Yorkers*, 1986-89, 1910, 13.

Gaynor was both a devout catholic and attorney, later appointed as a New York's Supreme Court Justice, followed by a Judgeship in the Appellate Division. His rulings were cited in courts around the country. Known as an honest reformer, Gaynor walked from Brooklyn for his first visit to City Hall on his inauguration day; "I enter upon this office with the intention of doing the very best I can for the City of New York. That will have to suffice; I can do no more." Hiring experts for roles in government that required skill or education, city employees were hired from civil service lists in the order they qualified, thereby eliminating nepotism and patronage. The only mayor in the city's history to endure an assassination attempt, Gaynor was shot in the throat by a terminated employee; he recovered with the bullet still in his throat. Tammany Hall refused their second term support; he was nominated by an independent group. Six days later, on a ship bound for Ireland, Gaynor died suddenly from the bullet's long-term effects. *Alderman Ardolph Lodges Kline served as Acting Mayor, until Mayor Mitchel's election. Mayor Kline would later become a U.S. Congressman.*

John Purroy Mitchel 1914-1917 Fusion

J. Purroy Mitchel
Bain News Service
Library of Congress

John Purroy Mitchel, at 35, the second-youngest Mayor elected in New York City, was nicknamed "Boy Mayor." A graduate of Columbia University and New York Law School, he served local government and politics. As Commissioner of Accounts, he discovered a protection racket in the Police Department; two borough presidents were dismissed, while others fled to avoid prosecution. As President of the Board of Alderman, Mitchel drafted the city's first comprehensive budget. On the fusion ticket, he won the mayoralship without Tammany's help. Mitchel's accounting systems led to waste-cutting measures. His competent administration devised the nation's first zoning plan to regulate the development of New York City. Salary and employment practices were both standardized. After losing re-election, Mitchel enlisted in the Army Air Service to become a pilot for World War I. He lost his life in a training accident in Louisiana, just before his 39th birthday.

John F. Hylan 1918-1925 Democratic

Hylan was raised on farm in upstate New York, came to New York City with his young wife and $4.50 in his pocket. Working for the Brooklyn Elevated Railroad, he eventually became a steam locomotive engineer, and worked for the railroad while studying law at New York Law School, where he graduated in 1897. Active in politics, Hylan successfully created two new Brooklyn

judgeships, and a job for himself, by authoring an amendment to the state legislature. As the 1917 Tammany candidate, Hylan defeated Mitchel by a large margin. His ethics in office varied widely from his immediate predecessor; he declared: "[City workers] must not roll in city automobiles with cigars in their mouths...[or] be conspicuous at baseball games when they should be in their offices." His opposition to any increase in the 5-cent subway fare helped his reelection. Hylan lost his third attempt for the party's nomination to State Senator Walker.

James J. Walker 1926-1932 Democrat

James J Walker; Bain Collection; Library of Congress

An actor and musician, Jimmy Walker was one of the city's most colorful mayors. He wrote and recorded the hit, "Will You Love Me in December As You Do In May." He served as both Assemblyman and State Senator. Walker continued Hylan's work by appointing fellow Tammany Hall brethren to city jobs and contracts. During Walker's administration, construction began on the Triborough Bridge and the West Side Highway. Walker spent 143 days of his first term on vacation, much of it abroad. Frequent nightclub appearances with celebrities gave him the nicknames, "Night Mayor" and "Beau James." Despite rumors of corruption in his administration, he was re-elected over Fiorello LaGuardia. The Depression raised a spotlight on Walker's neglect of the city; a 1931 State Legislature investigation revealed widespread corruption in his administration. Walker was called before Governor F. D. Roosevelt to answer to charges of accepting bribes in the hundreds of thousands. Mid-hearing, Walker resigned and then, fled to Europe with his mistress, leaving his wife and four children behind. Following Walker's 1935 return to the city, LaGuardia appointed him arbiter of the garment industry. After Walker's death, LaGuardia asked to have the name of Hudson Park changed to James J. Walker Park. *Interim Mayor: Joseph V. McKee, September 13-December 19th.*

John F. O'Brien 1933-1933 Democrat

O'Brien was elected to fill the remainder of Walker's term. Educated at Holy Cross College with masters' and law degree from Georgetown University, O'Brien previously served the public as Counsel for the City Corporation and as judge for the Surrogate Court of New York. Though a Tammany Hall supported candidate, he expanded the city's ability to collect taxes, restored order to the city's finances, and trimmed the budget – all measures of austerity during the country's great depression. After his failure to be re-elected, O'Brien returned to his legal work and served three times as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

Fiorello H. LaGuardia 1934-1945 Republican/Fusion

Mayor La Guardia speaks on WNYC; Fred Palumbo, World-Telegram, 3.23.1940

The son of Italian and Jewish immigrants, Fiorello LaGuardia, "Little Flower," is regarded as perhaps the finest mayor in the city's history. At 17, he joined the State Department, serving at U.S. consulates in Budapest, Trieste and Rijeka; he became fluent in Yiddish, German, French and Italian. A graduate of New York University Law School, he was later appointed Deputy Attorney General. Elected to Congress in 1916, he interrupted his term to serve on the Italian front as a World War I pilot. Elected President of the Board of Alderman, LaGuardia was then reelected to Congress in 1923, winning repeated

reelections; his 1934 mayoral election was on an anti-Tammany fusion platform. During his twelve years in office, 5'-2" LaGuardia restored the public's faith in City Hall by rooting out corruption in city government and hiring talented people to work in city offices. With Roosevelt's New Deal administrators, he ensured funding for the city's large capital projects: transportation networks, parks, playgrounds, pools, low-income housing, bridges, schools, hospitals and the first municipal airport (LaGuardia). He oversaw the city's rapid transit system unification, and the new City Charter creation, which re-formed the city's governmental structure. Many of the city's parks were "modernized" during LaGuardia's tenure.

New Yorkers felt connected with Mayor LaGuardia. Always first to show up at a fire or disaster; he visited city agencies unannounced, hosted a weekly radio show to keep New Yorkers up to date, and even conducted the city's orchestra periodically. After choosing not to pursue a fourth term, He was appointed Director General of the U.N. Relief and Rehabilitation Commission while continuing his weekly radio show. La Guardia died in 1947.

William O'Dwyer 1946-1950 Democrat

Born and raised in Ireland, O'Dwyer moved to the United States in 1910. He worked as a laborer, a New York City policeman and studied law at night at Fordham University Law School. O'Dwyer served as an attorney and as a Kings County Court judge. He won election as the Kings County District Attorney in 1939; his prosecution of Murder, Inc. made him a well-known prosecutor. After losing the 1941 mayoral election, O'Dwyer enlisted in the Army, achieving the rank of brigadier general. In 1946, O'Dwyer won on the Tammany Democratic ticket. At his inauguration, O'Dwyer celebrated to the song, "It's a Great Day for the Irish."

O'Dwyer appointed Robert Moses to lead his new Office of City Construction. He helped to negotiate the building site of the United Nations, oversaw New York City's first billion-dollar budget, instituted a Department of Traffic and raised the subway fare from 5 to 10 cents. Just after his reelection, a police scandal was uncovered by the Kings County District Attorney; the scandal combined with his failing health, prompted his early resignation in September 1950. President Harry Truman appointed him Ambassador to Mexico, where he promptly moved. By 1951, he returned briefly to New York City to answer some questions regarding his association with organized crime figures. O'Dwyer resigned as Ambassador to Mexico in 1952, but remained there until 1960. He died in New York City in 1964.

Vincent R. Impellitteri 1950-1953 Independent

The son of Sicilian immigrants, Impellitteri was an infant when his parents settled in Connecticut in 1901. After high school, and the navy, he studied law at Fordham Law School. While serving the city as Assistant District Attorney of New York, Impellitteri ran for Council President on Tammany's ticket. When O'Dwyer resigned, Impellitteri served as acting mayor. Though refused Tammany's support in the special November 1950 election, Impellitteri won as an Independent of the "Experience Party," with the slogan, "unbought and unbossed."

Impellitteri's term was largely defined by the Robert Moses' public works, including 88 miles of highway and multiple housing projects. He increased controls over budget items, and helped the city's shortfalls by increasing both sales tax and the bus and subway fares from 10 to 15 cents. Defeated in his reelection bid, Impellitteri was appointed to a criminal court seat by his opponent. Retired from the bench in 1965, Impellitteri died from Parkinson's disease in 1987.

Robert F. Wagner 1954-1965 Democrat

Born in New York City as the son of the U.S. Senator who was largely responsible for Social Security, Robert Wagner Jr. was a Yale University graduate, both undergraduate and law school. He served in the New York State Assembly for three terms, followed by the Army Air Corps during World War II, achieving the rank of lieutenant colonel. After the war, he was elected as Manhattan Borough President, where he served until elected Mayor.

Wagner's twelve years as mayor oversaw several of Robert Moses' large scale projects: Shea Stadium, Lincoln Center, Van Wyck Expressway, Grand Central Parkway, Long Island Expressway, the Verrazano-Narrows and Throgs Neck Bridges, and the 1964-65 World's Fair. Slum clearance and public housing creation were dominant on Wagner's agenda. The police force was expanded and the number of minorities in civil service increased substantially. Twice reelected, Wagner opted out of a fourth term. Appointed ambassador to Spain in1968, he resigned to run unsuccessfully in the mayoral primary in 1969. In 1976, President Jimmy Carter named him US representative to the Vatican. Later, he returned to law practice in New York City and was a commissioner in the 1980's City Charter Revision. In 1989, New York University named its graduate school of public service in his honor. Wagner died in New York City in 1991.

John V. Lindsay 1966-1973 Rep/Liberal, Liberal, Dem/Liberal

Born in New York City, John Lindsay served in the WWII U.S. Navy, studied at Yale Law School, worked in private practice in the city, and then, served as the White House liaison in the Justice department where he argued cases before the Supreme Court. He served four terms in Congress representing Manhattan as a liberal Republican, followed by his return to New York City, where he served two terms as the city's mayor. Elected first as a Republican, he switched to the Liberal party in 1969, and finally, to the Democrat party in 1971.


Mayor Lindsay & his Budget, Orlando Fernandez, World Telegram & Sun, 04.15.1966

Lindsay's personality helped the city through some of its most challenging years. The transit strike on his first day in office crippled the city, while the civil rights movement, anti-war protests and civil unrest led Lindsay to create both Neighborhood City Halls and the Urban Taskforce. He walked the streets, even in the poorest most run down neighborhoods, and listened to anyone willing to talk to him. His openness and charm helped to calm a highly tense city.

Abraham D. Beame 1974-1977 Democrat

British born Beame moved to the United States at age 1 in 1907. Educated in accounting at City College, Beame ran his accounting firm in Manhattan, taught in the public schools of New York City, served as Assistant Budget Director under O'Dwyer, Budget Director under Impellitteri, and City Comptroller under Wagner and Lindsay.

Given that the city was on the brink of bankruptcy, the first practicing Jew elected mayor of New York City, 5'2" Beame was forced to make massive cuts in the city's capital budget and to reduce the municipal payroll by 65,000. President Gerald Ford refused to provide federal aid to the city, famously quoted in the *New York Daily News*: "Ford to New York: Drop Dead." Eventually, Beame helped secure annual federal loans of $2.3 billion, starting in 1976, which also helped the city keep bankruptcy at bay. Despite the financial strain, the city hosted both a lavish bicentennial celebration and the Democratic National Convention in 1976. When Beame

came to office, the city budget had a $1.5 billion deficit, when he left, it had a surplus of $200 million. Despite Beame's success, Koch defeated him in the 1977 Democratic primary.

Edward I. Koch 1978-1989 Democrat


Edward Koch
www.repmanblog.com

Bronx born Edward I. Koch's Polish-Jewish family moved to Newark, New Jersey during the Depression and then, to Brooklyn when he was a teenager. Drafted into the army while a student at City College, he returned to study law at New York University. He served as district leader for two terms, and was then elected to the City Council. In 1968, he served five terms as a Congressman from a district that hadn't sent a Democrat to Congress since 1934 (the 17th district encompasses southern New York: parts of the Bronx, Westchester, and Rockland Counties). Koch won the 1977 election over impressive opponents, including future Governor Mario Cuomo. His eloquent inauguration speech gave the impoverished city strength: "These have been hard times. We have been drawn across the knife-edge of poverty. We have been shaken by troubles that would have destroyed any other city. But we are not any other city. We are the city of New York and New York in adversity, towers above any other city in the world."

Through several budget-cutting measures, Koch restored the city's credit, resulting in the city's ability to enter the bond market to raise capital funds. Koch's engaging personality was tied to his role as mayor. His oft heard question, "How 'm I Doin'?" invited New Yorkers to give him feedback on his work. During Koch's three terms, the city's annual budget doubled to $26 billion, approximately $19 billion of which was spent in the 1980s on capital projects.

Koch's attempt to be the city's first four-term mayor coincided with a series of city government scandals, as well as with recent criticisms for his publicly combative handling of the press and other public officials; he lost in the primary to Dinkins. After office, Koch has remained both active and popular. He has lectured, written books, worked as a columnist, hosted a radio show, and served as a judge on *The People's Court.*

David N. Dinkins 1990-1993 Democratic

David N. Dinkins was the city's first, and only, so far, African American mayor. Born in New Jersey, Dinkins studied mathematics at Howard University and law at Brooklyn Law School. He served as a Marine in Korea, practiced law in the City, served as District Leader, State Assemblyman from Harlem, President of the Board of Elections, City Clerk and Manhattan Borough President. In the narrowest defeat in city history, Dinkins beat Rudolph Guliani by only 47,000 votes.

While mayor, Dinkins became a national voice in favor of South African anti-apartheid sanctions. Demanding the city's divestment of $500 million pension fund stocks held in companies doing business in South Africa, Dinkins secured a bill allowing the city to rate banks by their position on apartheid. Dinkins appointed the first Special Commissioner of Investigations; focusing on schools lead to after hour youth centers called "Beacon Schools." Dinkins also implemented the All-Civilian Police Complaint Review Board. Dinkins was criticized for his handling of local racial unrest: African American and Jews riots in Crown Heights, the African American boycott of Korean Grocers in Brooklyn, and Washington Heights' civil unrest after their Dominican neighbor was shot by a police officer. He faced a $1.8 billion budget deficit when he entered

office, but the sluggish economy throughout his term disallowed much of his intended agenda while contributing to the deficit growth to $2.2 billion. Today, Dinkins is active in New York City politics, hosts a weekly radio show, and teaches public affairs at Columbia University.

Rudolph W. Guliani 1994-2001 Republican

Brooklyn born Rudolph Giuliani is the son of first generation working class Italian-Americans. Educated at Manhattan College and New York University Law School, he served in the Office of the U.S. Attorney, earning his way up the ladder until being appointed U. S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, where he was known as prosecutor of those in organized crime, illegal drug trades and white-collar crimes.

Elected as mayor on a Republican-Liberal-Independent Fusion platform, Giuliani set out to reverse the city's increasing crime rates and improve the overall quality of life in New York City. From 1990-1993, 340,000 jobs were eliminated from the city, overall crime was increasing and the annual murder rate averaged 2000. During Giuliani two terms, his zero tolerance to any crime helped the city reduce overall crimes by 44%, while the murder rate plummeted 61%. He sought reductions in commercial tax rates, particularly in tourist industries, helping businesses to flourish, creating some 180,000 private sector jobs. His administration cut spending by $7.8 billion with cost cutting, and productivity improvements, eliminating over 20,000 jobs without layoffs, and creating a $500 million reserve fund for the city. To reduce public assistance payables, Giuliani created the Work Experience Program. Since 1995, 340,000 were moved off public assistance, saving $650 million in city, state and federal funds. Public school based budgeting was enacted to increase accuracy in the Board of Education's budget planning while new programs provided schools with computers, arts education and tutoring.

Giuliani's sweeping reforms, particularly in the arenas of crime and safety have done much to improve the international reputation of New York City.

Michael R. Bloomberg 2002-Present Republican/Independent

Perhaps the wealthiest mayor in New York City's history, Michael Bloomberg switched from Democrat to Republican before he ran for mayor in 2001, but switched again to Independent when he was not comfortable with the Republican national leadership in 2007. Founder and 88% owner of Bloomberg L.P., as well as the 11th wealthiest person in the United States, Bloomberg worked his way through Johns Hopkins University, where he studied electrical engineering, and then earned his MBA from Harvard University. As Mayor, he does accept a city salary, but instead accepts $1 per year as remuneration for his services.

In 1993, voters approved a two-year term limit for their mayor, but in 2008, the New York City Council, as requested by Bloomberg, voted, 29-22, to extend the term limit to three terms. Voters were not consulted on this change. Bloomberg was reelected to a third term in November 2009, making him only the fourth mayor in New York City's history to be elected for three terms (twelve years). (His predecessors were LaGuardia, Wagner and Koch). In November 2010, a city-wide referendum passed overwhelmingly to restore the two term limit for the office of mayor.

Source: http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/hist_info/mayors.html